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THE LIFE OF



HENRI-MARIE BOUDON.



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EDWARD HEALY THOMPSON.

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THE LIFE
OF
HENRI-MARIE BOUDON,
ARCHDEACON OF EVREUX.

Dieu Seul.



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THE authorities which have been consulted for this volume are chiefly the Life of Boudon by Collet, published in 1753, and the *Vie Nouvelle*, which is attributed to the late Cardinal Mathieu, Archbishop of Besançon, although he did not affix his name to the work, which was published in 1837. To these must be added Boudon's own Letters, which furnish a mine of original and valuable information. Collet, apparently, cannot have seen all the manuscripts relative to Boudon preserved in the Great Seminary of Evreux, for the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, who examined them, was struck with the discrepancies between many statements of that historian as to various facts and events and their record in the Life of Boudon by his disciple and confidential friend, M. Bosguérard. Collet, indeed, speaks of no manuscripts except that of M. Courtin, priest of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet, that of a longer work by a priest of the Seminary of Foreign Missions, and of another which was in the keeping of the Pères Feuillants, and which he considered as the most complete of all. This last

was, no doubt, the Life composed by M. Thomas, Counsellor of the Châtelet, who was both a relative of Boudon and his intimate friend.

The works of M. Courtin and of M. Thomas are very full and clear with respect to Boudon's later years, during which period they lived in close communication with him, but they are vague and incoherent where they treat of the earlier portion of his life. This deficiency must be mainly attributed to the charity and humility of Boudon himself, who loved to bury in silence and oblivion the story of his trials and sufferings. He could not practise the same reticence with M. Bosguérard, who was fully cognisant of them and, indeed, through his fidelity participated not a little in the persecutions raised against him. Bosguérard was, in fact, the witness of all that belongs to the most interesting and active portion of the great Archdeacon's life, to whom he attached himself from the very first; and, as he enjoyed Boudon's full confidence, we know that what he related of his childhood and youth he must have learned from his own lips, or from some of his early friends at Rouen, whose testimony was perfectly reliable. The author of the *Vie Nouvelle* was, therefore, of opinion that materials existed for a new and more accurate Life of this holy priest, in which ecclesiastics desirous to attain to the perfection of their state, and pious souls among the faithful generally, would meet with touching examples and salutary lessons for instruction in the spiritual life. He had access, as has been said, to the docu-

ments preserved in the Great Seminary of Evreux, which at that time contained all the unpublished letters of Boudon which have since appeared, for the most part, in the Abbé Migne's collection of his works. We have, as was natural, relied on the author of the *Vie Nouvelle* wherever there has been a difference of statement between him and Collet, his opportunities and means of arriving at the truth having been so much surer and more abundant; nevertheless, we have been able to enrich these pages with much which we owe to Collet, who often gives details omitted by the later historian or relates with more fulness what the other has supplied in substance. There is a flow, a warmth, a freshness, in Collet's narrative which lead us to regret that he did not enjoy or did not profit by the advantages which were possessed by his excellent and venerable successor, whose pen is more accurate and circumspect, but, we should say, is also more reserved.

One of the reasons which has led to the publication of an English Life of Boudon is the desire of drawing the attention of Catholics in this country to his works, in which we believe abundant edification is to be found. It may be well, therefore, to make a few observations with the view of removing certain vague prejudices which are entertained by some persons on the subject of his writings. It has been supposed that in some of them may be detected a taint of the errors of Quietism and of those of Molinos on the subject of the disinterested love of God, in proof of which

it is alleged that his *Dieu Seul* was placed on the Index ; and that this tendency to Quietism had re-appeared in the *Règne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale*, which was certainly never put on the Index. Now, the *Dieu Seul* was published in 1662, and was visited with no sort of censure until 1696. This circumstance goes far to vindicate the orthodoxy of Boudon and to excuse any expression not sufficiently guarded to preclude a doubtful interpretation. Had any such existed it would hardly have been matter of surprise, seeing that neither the question of Quietism nor that of disinterested love had then been mooted. No archbishop of Cambrai had written the *Maxims of the Saints*, nor had any bishop of Meaux arisen to denounce him. It is also remarkable that Bossuet, then Archdeacon of Metz, had himself given very strong approbation to the *Dieu Seul*, declaring publicly that he had found nothing in it which was not conformable to sound doctrine, and that it was worthy of being placed in the hands of the faithful, as calculated to kindle and purify their zeal. This opinion he never revoked, nor was he accused afterwards, when the *Maxims of the Saints* were so loudly condemned by him, for inconsistency in not so doing. The *Dieu Seul* had also been approved at Rome by the Master of the Sacred Palace, it had been translated by the Secretary of one of the Congregations, and distributed and received there, as elsewhere, with the highest commendation. How greatly it was in request is proved by a fact mentioned by Boudon himself, that in Paris alone

50,000 copies had been sold. An edition of the *Dieu Seul*, however, appeared in Flanders, much falsified by the insertion of passages not written by Boudon, and by the addition even of a whole chapter which was not from his pen. For this we have his own authority, for he states that he saw the book himself, and it was his belief that the Milan impression of his work, which alone was censured, was a reproduction of this spurious edition. Be this as it may, the censure had no results and, indeed, it was limited to that particular issue of the work. Boudon says that they wrote him word from Flanders, where all the decrees of the Congregations of the Cardinals were invariably received, that the little work of *Dieu Seul* was not included in the list of books placed on the Index, because the censure had been passed only on the Milan edition; and, in fact, he adds, if it had been intended to condemn the book itself, it would have been censured absolutely, and this all the more because the original Italian translation, approved at Rome, continued to be printed and sold at Rouen, where, as also in Italy, it was held in great esteem. Submission would not have been wanting on Boudon's part had it been otherwise, for he was ready, as he declares, to throw, not that book only, but all his other works into the fire, if it were judged that the All-Good God would not be glorified by them.

The *Règne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale* was published in 1671. In writing it, Boudon had not relied upon his own lights. Besides the works of St. Teresa, with which he was so familiar that he almost knew

them by heart, he had studied and meditated upon all that the most eminent theologians and, especially, that saints had written on the subject of prayer, as his numerous quotations and references evince. But, notwithstanding all these precautions, seeing he had written this work before the condemnation of the errors of modern Quietism, he subsequently feared lest any terms he had used might be supposed to favour them or, at least, be capable of misinterpretation. He therefore put forth a new and corrected edition of the work, adding besides explanations and statements of doctrine so clear and precise that, if in this and other works of his written before the appearance of the errors in question there may still be found expressions which, taken by themselves, might by any possibility have an exaggerated or doubtful meaning imputed to them, they must clearly be understood in the strictly orthodox sense which Boudon's own formal statements affix to them. That he should have written occasionally with less verbal precision before the affair of Quietism arose was only natural, as he himself indicates, when, after saying with all simplicity that he believed that his works in general did not contain censurable matter, he adds, "It is true that now it is needful to take certain precautions which one did not think of formerly, and this is why I corrected my book on Prayer, which was reprinted some months ago, and made an addition to it which, it seems to me, must remove all difficulties." And, in fact, no difficulty was made about either this work or any of his other writings, which were all sub-

jected to the attentive examination of several bishops and distinguished theologians at the time of the great controversy between Bossuet and Fénelon and the widespread alarm entertained on the subject of Quietism. Nothing can more clearly demonstrate that they are exempt from all reproach than their standing the test of this ecclesiastical scrutiny, and being left intact, as containing a holy doctrine, calculated to be of great profit to the Church. Since that day no question has arisen concerning them, and they have continued to retain their place amongst the most highly valued spiritual works of which the eighteenth century was so prolific in France.

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII. and other Sovereign Pontiffs, we declare that, in all we have herein written respecting the life and virtues of Henri-Marie Boudon, we submit ourselves without reserve to the infallible judgment of the Apostolic See, which alone has authority to pronounce as to whom rightly belong the character and title of Saint.

A LIST
OF
BOUDON'S PUBLISHED WORKS.

Dieu Inconnu.

Dieu Présent Partout.

Conduite de la Divine Providence.

**Dieu Seul ; ou Association pour l'Intérêt de Dieu
Seul.**

Dévotion au Règne de Dieu.

Vie Cachée avec Jésus en Dieu.

Le Règne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale.

La Gloire de Dieu dans les Ames du Purgatoire.

Dévotion à la Très-Sainte Trinité.

Sainteté de l'État Ecclésiastique.

**Science du Catéchisme ; ou Obligation des Pasteurs
d'instruire les Peuples.**

**Chrétien Inconnu ; ou Idée de la Grandeur du Chré-
tien.**

La Science et la Pratique du Chrétien.

Amour de Jésus au Saint-Sacrement de l'Autel.

**Observations sur la Communion et les Cérémonies de la
Messe.**

Du Respect dû aux Eglises et de leur Profanation.

Les Saintes Voies de la Croix.

Le Malheur du Monde.

Avis Catholiques touchant la Véritable Dévotion à Marie.

Dieu Seul ; ou le Saint Esclavage de la Mère de Dieu.

Dévotion à l'Immaculée Mère de Dieu.

Les Grands Secours de la Divine Providence par la Très-Sainte Mère de Dieu.

Dévotion aux Neuf Chœurs des Anges, et en particulier aux SS. Anges Gardiens.

Dévotion à Saint Joachim.

Vives Flammes d'Amour dans le B. Jean de la Croix.

L'Homme Intérieur ; ou la Vie du P. Jean Chrysostome.

L'Homme de Dieu en la Personne du P. Jean-Joseph Surin.

Vie de Saint Taurin, Évêque d'Evreux.

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CHAPTER XXII.

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God Alone his motto. His personal appearance. Quality of his mental powers. His simplicity; his whole character harmonious. Concentration of his mind on God. Creatures viewed in reference to Him. His attractions to divine love. His abiding peace. Special devotion to the Holy Ghost. His love of his neighbour; his liberality and gratitude. His sincere self-contempt. His meekness and humility. The value he set on crosses. His acceptance of mortifications; his prudence and tenderness with others. His unremitting prayer. Aspirations for the coming of God's kingdom. Boudon a primitive Christian; Apostolic character of his letters. His writings the transcript of himself *page 384*

CHAPTER I.

BOUDON'S CHILDHOOD TO THE AGE OF TWELVE YEARS.

OF all those numerous uncanonised persons of eminent holiness with whose lives we are familiar, there are few perhaps who seem to bear more strikingly the essential lineaments of the saintly character than Henri-Marie Boudon. It is not of good works or of acts of heroic virtue that we here speak; assuredly, Boudon was rich in the former and conspicuous for the latter, yet these may be from time to time exhibited in a greater or less degree where the individual still lacks the marks of saintliness. Since the saint in his perfected state, that is, in the attainment of the full stature of the new man in Christ, must have made a complete holocaust of self, the essence of sanctity may be judged to consist in the great transformation which he has undergone; it must consist as much in what he is not, as in what he is. "It is not I who live," says St. Paul.* Complete self-abnegation, the entire emptying, so to say, of self, is rare, very rare. "God alone" were the two words always on Boudon's lips; and they may be said to be the motto of his life, for no two words could better express the inner man. Not only was God the only guest of his soul, but there was room, so to say, for none but Him. "Certainly, in

* Gal. ii. 20.

proportion as creatures leave our heart," he says in one of his letters—and a thousand like observations of his could be quoted—"God will enter in; and when there are no longer any remaining there, God alone will act therein." In using these words he is describing his own state, and is also expressing the same sentiment that we find in the pages of the *Imitation*, that treasure-house of condensed truth. "Thou must be naked and bear a pure heart towards God, if thou wilt be free, and experience how sweet the Lord is. And, indeed, thou wilt never attain to this, unless thou be prevented and drawn by His grace, that so thou mayest be united to Him alone, when thou hast cast out and dismissed all others." *

This freedom Boudon specially enjoyed, and hence his life, though one of much trial, cannot be called a life of struggle. An extraordinary light vouchsafed to him from his earliest years, and an extraordinary generosity in corresponding with that illumination, spared him many of those laborious steps by which souls ordinarily climb the ladder of perfection. Most aspirants after holiness are continually finding out that they have been unconsciously keeping something back from God, a reservation which has proved a weight and an encumbrance in their ascent; and though, at each fresh discovery, they put a force upon themselves and make a new surrender, nevertheless it is, as it were, piecemeal that they give themselves to God and yield up to Him the full dominion of their hearts. It would be rash to assert that the saintly subject of this biography made a whole burnt-offering of himself from the very outset of his career, or to suppose that he was exempt from the common law of progress in grace, but

* *Imitation of Christ*, b. ii. c. viii. 5.

it is quite compatible with this admission to believe that the surrender of himself from his earliest youth to be wholly possessed by Him of and in Whom are all things, and Who alone *is*, was singularly perfect and complete. The narrative of his life, however, will best exhibit the truth of this assertion.

Henri-Marie Boudon was born on the 14th of January, 1624, at La Fère, a small town in the province of Picardy, which, however, enjoyed more consideration in those days because it was a fortified place. His father, Jean Boudon, was lieutenant of the citadel under M. de Beaumont, the governor, and his entry as *écuyer* in his child's baptismal registry attests, along with other circumstances, his title to rank as a gentleman. His mother, Antoinette Jourdin, belonged to a family distinguished in the magistracy of the country, and reckoned among her relatives four presidents of what were styled *cours souveraines*. They were, in both a moral and religious sense, a very respectable couple. Jean Boudon is spoken of as a brave and virtuous gentleman, and his wife as a lady of exemplary life; the faults she exhibited after her husband's death not being apparent during his lifetime, having probably been kept in check by his wisdom, firmness, and good example. Their married life was happy except for one circumstance: they had no children; and, more than fifteen years having elapsed since their union, but little hope seemed to remain, humanly speaking, that they would obtain the desired boon. Yet Antoinette Boudon continued to address fervent prayers to Heaven that she might become a mother. One day, when she was bitterly bewailing her privation, it is said that a lady of grave and majestic mien approached and, after exhorting her to confidence,

told her that her petition was granted, and that she would be the mother of two sons, the second of whom would be the glory of his house. M^{me}. Boudon had never seen this lady before, and she never beheld her again ; but, whoever she might be, it was not long ere her prediction began to be fulfilled. The long-desired son came, but the parents had soon to mourn his loss, for he expired almost immediately after his baptism. The hopes of a second, however, consoled them for their disappointment, and M^{me}. Boudon, while expecting his birth, never ceased to implore the aid of the Blessed Virgin ; so that it was under the special protection of her of whom he was to be so devoted a servant, that Henri Boudon came into the world on a Saturday, the day peculiarly devoted to her honour, and which happened in that year to be also the vigil of the Sunday dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus, both which circumstances he always joyfully remembered.

He was simply baptized, what the French call "*ondoyé*," in his father's house on the day of his birth, the baptismal ceremonies being deferred to some future opportunity ; a practice, which by its frequency, when no sufficient motive could be alleged in its excuse, had become a positive abuse, and was afterwards reformed. In the present case the solemnisation of the rite, so far as the supply of the omitted ceremonies of the Church was concerned, was delayed for four months. This postponement was the occasion of its being graced with some exceptional honours of the temporal order. Few children of his condition—for the family of Boudon, though of gentle extraction and honourable position, could not be reckoned amongst the nobility—have received the like. A reigning queen, a dowager queen,

and a queen in prospect were present at the ceremony : Anne of Austria, the consort of Louis XIII. ; Mary of Medicis, widow of Henri IV. ; and Henrietta Maria, the king's sister and future wife of the unfortunate Charles I. of England. The object of this regal progress to La Fère was Henrietta's desire to visit a chapel in the neighbourhood dedicated to Our Lady of Liesse. The princess was pleased to be godmother to the infant whom she held at the font, allowing her own name to be conferred upon him. Hence it was that he was christened Henri-Marie, a circumstance to which he was never known in after life to allude. It was difficult in this small country town to find a godfather worthy to take his stand by the daughter of kings. Charles de Beaumont, the governor, who was also first *Maitre d'Hôtel* to Louis XIII., appeared the most eligible for the office, and was selected by the princess herself. The little place, as we may well imagine, was in no slight stir on this occasion ; in fact, it was made a day of general festivity, the inhabitants cordially partaking in the joy of a family which they held in much esteem. There is a strange contrast between the pompous exordium of this child's life and his subsequent career, with its deep humiliations. No doubt it was a day of gratified feelings and flattering prognostics to the happy parents, but it had no consequences or results in store. It was a day which was to have no morrow like itself, and whose brightness was to set with its own sun. Henri-Marie was, indeed, to be the glory of his house, but not in the way that parental affection may possibly have anticipated in the midst of these unaccustomed honours and in the exultation of heart which they may, not unnaturally, have excited.

The next recorded event is one much more intimately

connected with the future of the babe. M^{me}. Boudon, who had already, in consequence of a previous vow, dedicated her child to Mary, hastened as soon as the supplementary rites of Holy Church were administered, to renew her promise more fully and solemnly by taking him to Notre Dame de Liesse. Here, for the second time, he was placed by his mother under the protection of the Blessed Virgin. Through her intercession M^{me}. Boudon believed that she had obtained him, and to her she now offered him anew with much devotion and many prayers. Never were prayers more perfectly answered, for, amongst the many souls distinguished by their love and attachment to Mary and their zeal for her honour, Henri Boudon may be said to possess a peculiar pre-eminence. This pious pilgrimage of his parents was ever to him a subject of grateful remembrance ; and he, who through life avoided all mention of the earthly honours which had encircled him in his cradle, and the memory of which might have brought him some consideration, was continually adverting, both in his conversation and in his writings, to the joy he experienced on reflecting that he had been consecrated thus early to the love and service of the Queen of Angels. "O my good mother," we find him exclaiming, "my most sweet and compassionate mother, who hast been such to me ever since I began to live, if all hearts belonged to me, I would willingly give them all to thee. From this very moment they would breathe nothing but thy pure love, and all tongues would publish nothing but thy undying praises."

The gratitude which he thus expressed to the Mother of God for her constant and loving care, he was ever in a still higher sense pouring forth in acts of adoration

to Divine Providence. Like the royal Psalmist, that great worshipper of God as the nourisher and sustainer of our lives, who leads the choir in offering to Him as such the sweet incense of praise, Boudon virtually declares that he was left unto God ever since he was born, for that to Providence alone was he indebted for his preservation during his infancy. He appears to have been a delicate child, and his earthly mother, as yet a tender parent to him, was unremitting in her care; but there were certain supernatural circumstances connected with his babyhood, or which he esteemed to be so, and to which he is said more than once to have alluded. The devil, it would seem, had a spite against him, and not only terrified him by appearing in the form of hideous spectres, but often threw him out of his cot at night, desiring to kill him. Be this as it may, Boudon always believed that he owed his life during infancy to the special care of Providence; and not only life, but a singular privilege and benediction of the spiritual order; namely, an unusually early use of reason, enabling him to make a fruitful employment of the grace of baptism from the very dawn of life. This remarkable precocity was noticed by others besides himself, but it rests on his own surer testimony, for he confided to an ancient and very holy nun of St. Jean d'Angely that, when he was as yet but three years of age, he felt himself inflamed with an ardent love of God and a tender devotion for the Blessed Virgin and St. John the Evangelist. He learned to read with the greatest facility, and this knowledge helped to develop in him the wonderful love and taste which Heaven had bestowed on him for the ceremonies of the Church, and for its psalmody. He would begin at a very early hour of the morning, as he lay in his little bed, to sing

some portion which he had remembered, and this with such exceeding sweetness that the servants used to be glad to wake up and listen to him. Such beginnings gave promise of a future rich in graces and in their fruits; nor were these anticipations to be disappointed; nevertheless, he was to owe all to his "good mother," Divine Providence, for his earthly parents were soon to fail him; the one by death, the other through a strange instability of character, though at present she was all to him that a Christian parent ought to be.

M. Boudon seemed to be securely settled at La Fère, enjoying the respect of his fellow-citizens and the confidence of his commanding officer, now M. de Bonville, who had succeeded M. de Beaumont in his charge. Being a frontier town, the place was considered one of high responsibility, and the slightest shade of suspicion or umbrage taken in some influential quarter might readily occasion the removal of the governors. Some such court intrigue, it would appear, led to M. de Bonville's dismissal. Whether it were from sympathy with his commander or from fear of being included in his disgrace, which he preferred to forestall by his own voluntary surrender, M. Boudon resigned his office, and followed M. de Bonville to Routot, a *bourg* of Normandy, intending henceforth to devote himself in his retirement to the education of his young son, a purpose which he was never to be permitted to realise. Man proposes, and God disposes.

The family encountered an adventure on their road, not unfrequent in those days, when travelling was accompanied with considerable danger as well as difficulty. Their carriage was attacked by highwaymen. But M. Boudon was too old a soldier to be daunted by a handful of robbers, and, with the help of his ser-

vants, whom his courage emboldened, charged them so vigorously that they took to flight. The baby, Henri, was the only sufferer, one of his frocks being the sole article of plunder which the robbers carried off. His biographer remarks that, a few years later, he would probably have made them a present of his cloak also.

M. Boudon died not long after fixing himself in his new abode. To his wife this was a fatal loss. It would have been well for her had we been able to say that she judged it to be irreparable, but, in fact, she hastened to repair it in a very discreditable manner. *M^{me}*. Boudon had hitherto passed for a model of discretion and matronly virtue, so that the scandal given by her second marriage was all the greater. It is difficult to account for a change so sudden, but experience daily shows that there are persons who, like her, walk well only while they have some one to look up to and lean upon as a respected tutor and guide. Such to her had been her first husband; the second object of her choice was, not only much her inferior in social position, being a mere village doctor, but a man of coarse and vulgar manners. Perceiving that she had lost caste by the step she had taken, she thought to mend matters by purchasing for her husband an office which conferred nobility, alienating for this purpose a portion of the fortune which had been bequeathed to her by the father of her child, and which would have been his legitimate inheritance. But what she could not procure for her ill-nurtured as well as low-born partner was a patent of nobility for his soul, which continued as plebeian as before. Henri spent several years under the roof of his stepfather, whose rough and repulsive behaviour never elicited from the angelic child the faintest token of repugnance. He

always behaved to him with the same docility and submission as if he had been his own parent, and, after he left home, continued to mention him with such unvarying respect that many persons actually believed him to be so; a mistake which, when Boudon perceived, he never rectified. This abstention, dictated by humility, served to confirm an error which has even found its way into print; for Collet tells us that the *Journal des Savants* stated that the great Archdeacon of Evreux was the son of a village surgeon. Had such been his parentage it would have been no discredit to him, and the circumstance is only worth recording as throwing a light on the character of Boudon, who from his youth upwards always chose in preference what was of least account in the world's eyes.

Had Boudon not been so favoured a child of Divine Providence, he must have suffered seriously from the altered circumstances in which he was now placed. For, through the unaccountable carelessness and well-nigh indifference in regard to this child of so many prayers which had come over the mother, he was left almost wholly to himself; but never did child abuse his liberty less. He continued to read all the books of piety on which he could lay his hands, making the Psalms especially his dear delight and the subject of his unremitting study; hearkening to them when chanted in the offices of the Church with an attention which nothing could distract, and coming home to warble them sweetly to himself. And so he grew in innocency and holiness, cradled in the arms of his Heavenly Father, cherished by Mary his loving mother, and guarded by good angels, but almost overlooked by his earthly parent. Nevertheless, when he had arrived at the age of eight, she bethought herself that the boy

was old enough to begin Latin, and accordingly placed a grammar in his hands containing the first elements of that language. But there was nothing in these early rudiments of learning to captivate the mind of a child like Henri, as yet too young to appreciate the value of secular instruction, and loving only what spoke to him of God. So he put the dry book on one side, and said that he did not mean to study it any more. His mother showed her usual indifference, and exerted no authority to constrain his inclinations. With almost any other child this neglect might have had very prejudicial consequences, but God was pleased to overrule all things for his spiritual good, and did not permit him to suffer for an act which, indeed, sprang, we may say, from that all-absorbing love of God which even at that tender age was claiming the exclusive empire of his soul.

Although, however, he declined the labour of study, because as yet he could not perceive its connection with the honour of God, little Henri was not idle. Occupation in what he believed would be pleasing to God was his own greatest pleasure. The simple winning graces and natural beauty with which he was adorned made his piety singularly attractive. Other children were drawn to love him and to desire to imitate him. They used to follow him to church, and if they could not carry thither hearts as fervent, they were, at least, led to copy his devout behaviour in the house of God. Often he would collect them together and exhort his little audience to love God and repent of their faults. Then he would teach them how to make a good confession, and how to draw much fruit therefrom. Meanwhile he kept feeding his own devotion with spiritual reading, loving particularly the

Lives of Saints. Having found a panegyric of St. John the Evangelist, already the saint of his predilection, the saint of his piety, as he used to call him, and whose protection he said he had experienced almost as soon as he began to live, he was so filled with admiration for the virtues of the virgin disciple of Jesus that, retiring apart, he knelt down and made a solemn offering of himself to follow his example in all things. He was as yet too young to comprehend the full import of what he promised, but the fidelity with which he kept the engagements thus made in his infancy, proves that the attraction which moved him to make them came from God. "There are things," he later observed, "which God permits us to do without reflection, allowing it to be so because, if we consulted the rules of prudence, we should not do them. God accepts offers and vows made somewhat ignorantly, it is true, but made sincerely, through a movement of grace and not from human presumption and reliance on self." "We can drink of Thy chalice," said the Apostles,* and Jesus accepted the offer, although He who knew what was in man saw that as yet they did not realise what they were forward to promise.

This young child feared and shrank from the approach of sin with a holy timidity, especially from anything which might soil the purity of his soul, for he had the instinct of purity while as yet, from his tender age, he could not have apprehended the nature of the vices opposed to it. But he had that chastity of heart and mind which made him keep himself all for God and led him to be shy of too near a contact with creatures. Hence he was averse to any great familiarity, and withdrew himself from those fondlings and caresses

* St. Matthew xx. 22 ; St. Mark x. 39.

of which children, particularly children so lovable and attractive as he was, are the frequent objects. At this period of his childhood, however, he was guilty of two faults, which, if we may judge from his penitent recollection of them in after years, were the two principal offences of his singularly blameless life. He used to serve Mass, and, yielding to a sudden temptation of sensuality, he one day drank a little wine which he found at the bottom of the cruet. He was probably in the habit of making his confession to the very priest whose Mass he served; any how, shame induced him to omit the mention of this act in the tribunal of penance. The other offence was the having accepted the charge for a few hours of some money at the request of a religious, while the superior was visiting the monastery. The timidity of a child might greatly excuse this fault, and ignorance would have entirely exonerated him from blame. Probably, however, he suspected something wrong, since he afterwards made it matter of grave self-reproach that he had given his consent. When preparing to make his first communion at the age of nine years, he confessed both these transgressions with much contrition, and to the close of his life continued to speak of them in terms of bitter regret; a regret enhanced tenfold by the remembrance of the concealment into which under the influence of shame he had been betrayed.

The sensible favours of God had been checked awhile by these two unconfessed sins, but now the sunshine of his soul returned, and a very torrent of spiritual sweetness and joy filled it on his reception for the first time of Him who is the source of all sweetness and of all joy. God, who designed this child to publish hereafter His glory, willed before long to awaken in his

mind the wish to fit himself for that object, and to open his eyes to the necessity of education, in order to enable him to magnify more suitably the God of his heart, and to praise Him in His angels and in His saints. But he was to address himself to this work in a thoroughly Christian manner, and with a consciousness of what he was doing which greatly increased its merit. He took up his rejected grammar, and, after making a long and fervent prayer, carried it to the foot of an image of our Lady, imploring her to be the patroness of his studies, and never permit that in those studies he should ever propose to himself any other aim than the glory of her Divine Son. He was between eleven and twelve years of age when he resumed, or, rather, commenced, the study of Latin, and he always blessed God for not having allowed him to begin it earlier, when other motives besides God alone might have actuated him and marred the simplicity of his intention. By his own avowal, then, that which constituted the leading character of his devotion through life was already, before he had completed twelve years, in full possession of his soul. It had also assumed a distinctive form before his spiritual eye, which was never to lose sight of it. He was ever saying, "Let us act and suffer for God alone. Let us live for God alone. God alone suffices us." This sentiment was with him like what the Italians call the *motivo* of a piece of music : all else that he expressed was but a variation on this leading air. Whether he poured forth his heart in praise of the great Mother of God, Mary Immaculate, or of his patron saints, or of those princes of Heaven, the angels, to whom he was so lovingly and admiringly devout, all was included and all was summed up in his mind in God alone, in

whom and for whom he magnified the creations of His omnipotent hand and the special objects of His eternal love.

These words, "God Alone," figure at the head of all his letters, and were continually dropping from his lips, for his heart was full of them to overflowing, so that he never wearied of uttering them or seemed so much as to reflect whether he might weary others by this constant repetition. After a few years, we are told, he was better known by them than by his family name; for, whether in mockery, as in the case of some, or from esteem in that of others, he came to be designated by them, as men often have a nickname given them in consequence of some peculiarity. What Boudon understood by these words may be gathered from his own language. "The spirit of the Man-God," he said, "must be our spirit. We ought to think and speak like Jesus Christ, not acting by the mere natural light, which suffices to make us act as men, but by the divine light of His grace; seeing and judging things by faith, and looking at them as they present themselves only according to the knowledge which God has of them and which He gives to us." Thus his aim, we see, was in all things to conform himself to the Head of that body of which we are the ingrafted members. Jesus, when on earth, said, "I cannot of Myself do anything. Amen, amen I say unto you, the Son cannot do any thing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing;" * and He was ever speaking of the work which the Father had given Him to do. "The words that I speak to you," He said at His last supper, "I speak not of Myself. But the Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works." † Thus Boudon desired

* St. John v. 19, 30.

† *Ibid.*, xiv. 10.

to live only the life which the Spirit of Jesus would live in him. And so he continues: "The Christian who views things in this light"—that is, only as God views them—"troubles himself very little as to what the world may judge and say. He consults herein neither his repugnances, nor his inclinations, nor his interest, nor his pleasure. Thus, as he loves his friends in Jesus Christ, he loves his enemies for Jesus Christ; and, inasmuch as he is one with Jesus Christ, he loves those whom His Divine Saviour has loved, even to the giving his life for them. To act in any other manner is something monstrous in a Christian, because it is to live by another life than that of his adorable Head."

Such was the meaning attached by Boudon to those words: "God Alone." As the Living Father had sent Jesus, and He lived by the Father, so God in Christ must live in him and be all in all. Boudon's heart as well as his understanding had so fully accepted and embraced their import, that, alike amidst his sweetest consolations and his most humiliating crosses, all that was created disappeared from his view. He saw God alone. This was the character, the spirit of his devotion from the very outset of life; and herein we cannot but discern something very remarkable. There was a maturity in his saintliness even in childhood; and he seemed to start from a height which the holiest may have cause to rejoice at having attained after years spent in the service of God. God, and the thought of God, alone filled, occupied, and engrossed the mind of this child of twelve years old; and his future life was to be but the development, or the exponent, of that which, in a sense, he appears to have grasped in its fulness and perfection from his earliest youth.

CHAPTER II

BOUDON'S LIFE IN M. DUHAVEL'S PENSION.

HENRI was allowed at first to prosecute his studies at home, but, as it was impossible for him with all his application to acquire without a proper preceptor more than the rudiments of Latin, it was determined to send him to Rouen, where he was placed with an ecclesiastic of the name of Duhavel, who prepared boys for attending the classes of the Jesuit college. This priest had a young relative of his own name at Routot, a friend of Henri; a circumstance which had probably served to direct the choice of Boudon's mother. The mastery of the first elements of knowledge, so laborious to some children, was to him more like a game. He was aided by the happiest memory and the quickest powers of apprehension, not always associated, as they were in him, with that deeper penetration which favours a full comprehension of whatever subject is taken in hand; and then this child of Mary received, no doubt, through his heavenly mother, the light and ability which he had so humbly solicited at her hands. The Jesuit Fathers, with their unrivalled capacity for training the youthful mind and marking its dispositions, whether of nature or grace, had soon learned to appreciate the merits of their new scholar. P. Gaspart,

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regent of the class, and a very holy as well as learned priest, admitted young Boudon into a congregation which he had established amongst his pupils under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and the holy angels, and which, under his guidance, was a great means of fortifying their piety by promoting salutary practices calculated to foster it. Henri embraced these with ardour, and gave himself, young as he was, to the fulfilment of the counsels of perfection with a zeal and in a spirit of self-denial which were to find ample occasion for exercise in the life before him.

The boy, indeed, had already no small share of unsought mortification, which he made meritoriously voluntary by his joyful acceptance of it. His stepfather, who was extravagant and penurious at one and the same time, prodigal where his own gratification was concerned, niggardly and mean where duty and the good of others called for outlay, did not allow anything for the child's food at M. Duhavel's pension. His mother was to supply for this deficiency by sending provisions for him through some country-people who went every week to Rouen to sell their produce; but the avarice of her husband reduced this dole to so slender a pittance that it was quite insufficient for the nourishment of a boy of Henri's age, who, nevertheless, was wont further to diminish it by reserving a portion for the poor. He even stripped himself of some of his linen to provide for the destitute, and devoted to them all the money which his mother would occasionally send him. The boy would often have been left without the common necessaries of life had not M. Duhavel's mother, who noted his self-denying charity, secretly placed some food for him in his room. Henri guessed who was his benefactress, and thanked

her warmly, but in a manner which betrayed regret at not being allowed to suffer something for God.

His charity did not limit itself to the corporal wants of the poor. He employed his recreation hours in collecting children out of the streets, and speaking to them about their souls; telling them of the love and kindness of Jesus, who had made Himself poor for the love of them, and had died upon the Cross to redeem them, and how they ought to be themselves ready to die rather than offend God. His simple words and accent of fervour had a wonderful effect on their young hearts. What he thus did at Rouen he also did at Routot during the holidays, assembling together the village children to teach them the mysteries of the faith and instruct them in the way of salvation; and they are said to have hearkened to him as if he had been an angel sent from Heaven.

But it was not children only who were indebted to him for spiritual benefits. A baker's wife having heard that one of M. Duhavel's boarders received scarcely any help from his family, but was remarkable for his zeal for souls, her compassionate woman's heart devised a scheme for giving him an occasional meal, and furnishing him at the same time with the meat and drink which he valued most of all. While her husband was absent on his daily rounds, she would collect a number of poor women in her house, women who thought much more about their bodies' needs than those of their souls, and forthwith send for the young apostle. We are told that he used to address this little assembly with a grace and a force indescribable. After instructing them, and raising their ideas concerning their poor and indigent state, he would prepare them for the reception of the Sacraments, and especially for

Communion. Collet says that, while speaking to them of the Adorable Eucharist, he would break forth at times in one of those sallies of glowing fervour, so familiar to those who are acquainted with his works. "Let us open our hearts to Him," he would exclaim; "let us give them full vent, let us die of love, let us lose ourselves in this abyss of love, this Divine Sacrament. Ye Seraphim, angels of love, enkindle us with your fires! Incomparable Queen of pure love, burn us in thy flames, so that, being thus utterly and holily consumed, we may be the victims of the love of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament." Such was Henri Boudon's language at thirteen or fourteen years of age. By and by he was to begin to form these souls, so lately grovelling in the mire of their animal natures, to the practice of mental prayer, the very name of which had been hitherto unknown to them. He taught them how to converse interiorly with God, and some of these simple, though till now sinful, souls corresponded with so much fidelity to the grace vouchsafed them that, with the help of his direction, they arrived at a high degree of piety and even attained to the gift of contemplation. The greater number of these women, at any rate, reformed their ways, made a general confession, and led for the future edifying lives.

An anecdote which is related of one of them shows how deeply she had drunk in the spirit of her teacher. The Jesuits were beginning to build a church, and this poor woman took the Father Rector a crown piece as her contribution. Like the mite of the widow, it was all she possessed. The Rector, observing how very scantily she was clothed, praised her good-will, but declined her gift, saying that he would not deprive her of the little

she had, but would much rather assist her himself, as she seemed to be in want. Then this woman, raising her voice, answered in a firm, though respectful, tone, "Know, my father, that I am a Christian, and consequently the daughter of a great King and the heiress of a great Kingdom. You are mistaken, I am not poor; no one is poor who has God for his true father." At these words the good priest hesitated no longer to accept an offering made with so much faith.

Young Boudon used also to visit the sick in the hospitals, and render them every service in his power. It was little he had to give; he was almost as poor as the poorest, but the kindness and love with which he invariably treated the destitute won their hearts more surely than money can ever do; indeed, it was a maxim with him, which he did not fail to urge on all whom he could influence, even in those early years, that it was not sufficient to abstain from being rude to the needy and from repulsing them, but that we ought to receive them with great respect, and thank God for giving us the opportunity of serving Jesus Christ in His brethren. It is recorded how one day he assisted a young boy whom he found dying in the street. By some unaccountable negligence no heed was given to him, not even by the Curé of the place, who passed him by as did the priest the wayfarer in the Parable who had fallen among thieves. Yet it was a confessor that the poor youth ardently desired. Henri, like the good Samaritan, stopped and bent over him, and a compassionate artisan, who had also been attracted by the boy's moans, with the aid of Henri, carried him to his own house. Henri then went in search of the Vicaire, who, sad to relate, proved as unserviceable as the Curé, being apparently an obtuse and ill-instructed man.

From what Boudon's biographer says, it would appear that this incident did not occur in Rouen itself, but in some neighbouring village. If pastors like the two here mentioned were frequently to be found in the rural districts, we may well understand M. Olier's special compassion for country parishes. The Vicaire having withdrawn, saying he could do nothing, Henri patiently addressed himself to preparing the boy for the sacrament of penance, teaching him how to make acts of contrition. He then went in search of another priest, who heard his confession and gave him absolution. This ecclesiastic was so touched by the good dispositions in which he found this poor ignorant child, prepared (it may be said) by another child, that he could scarce restrain his tears. The boy died in young Boudon's arms, who had the body removed to his own room until he could get it interred.

M. Duhavel seems to have been peculiarly indulgent to his pupils where works of mercy were concerned, as will further appear from what we are about to relate. Henri had no sooner entered his establishment than he began to form a close friendship with the best disposed and best behaved of his school-fellows. He had speedily won their affection, both by his own personally engaging character and manners and by that secret influence which eminent virtue always exercises. Soon they were ready to do anything which he advised, and to follow wherever he led the way. Some he taught how to employ their time well, and, above all, how to employ it all for God; others he instructed how to receive the Sacraments profitably, and how to raise their hearts to God in prayer; others, again, how to combat their temptations. He seemed a born director of souls, and scholars both older than himself

and much further advanced in their studies than he could be, laid bare their consciences to him and begged his counsels with a confidence quite surprising. The seed which young Boudon sowed at that time bore fruit in some cases a hundredfold. Two instances are specified. P. Gallie had been one of his fellow-students. He was endowed with all those brilliant qualities which ensure to a youth a flattering reception by the world, which is all one with saying that he was ready supplied with what might tempt him to barter Heaven for earth to the loss of his immortal soul. But he was fortunate enough to meet and form a friendship with Boudon, who pointed out to him the vanity of the world and its perils. Young Gallie resolved to flee from its seductions, and for this end joined the Society of Jesus. A hundred times was he heard to say that, after God, he owed his vocation to those pious exercises which Boudon engaged him and others among his school-fellows to adopt. M. Fernel, afterwards Superior of the Foreign Missions, also declared that it was in consequence of what he heard from the lips of Boudon that he was led to renounce the world and enter the ecclesiastical state.

Allusion has been made to certain pious exercises which the young man induced a chosen band of his fellow-boarders to follow. Other youths joined the little company, and all placed themselves under the patronage of Mary, enrolling themselves in P. Gaspart's Congregation already mentioned. Not content, however, with the exercises there pursued, they had an humble oratory of their own at M. Duhavel's, where they assembled every day to offer their homage to the Queen of Angels; she was also the constant theme of their conversation at meals and during recreation time.

But their greatest pleasure was to visit churches and chapels dedicated to her, and when a holiday gave them the opportunity, they would make a pilgrimage to some place of pious resort in the neighbourhood, taking off their shoes and stockings as soon as they were outside the town, and, as they thus advanced in devout procession, would make hill and valley resound with their canticles in Mary's honour. Nor did the day suffice them; as several slept in the same room, they would awake each other to sing Psalms and hymns in her praise, and on the days when her office was said by the Congregation, they would vie with each other in being first at the chapel door, where they would all be gathered at three or four o'clock in the morning waiting in prayer for its opening; remembering, as Boudon years afterwards observed, those words which the Church applies to the Mother of God: "Blessed is he who waiteth at the posts of my doors."* They kept a book in which they had registered their promise to dedicate themselves to her service as much as the order of God should require or permit, adding a special vow to defend her immaculate conception. For her festivals they prepared themselves by a week of strict fasts and mortifications, communicating on the feast with great fervour; so deep a devotion, indeed, had Mary obtained for them to the Adorable Sacrament of the Altar, that some among their number asked permission to pass the whole night in prayer at the door of the church; but their director refused permission. No doubt in this as in all else they were imitating their leader and model, who, until forbidden by his confessor, was in the habit of spending a good part of the night in this

* Proverbs viii. 34.

manner, regardless of the inclemency of the season or the notice of passers-by. All the particulars here related we owe to Boudon himself, who records the practices of these pious youths in one of his latest works, *Devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God*. He never names himself, but it must be remembered that this little elect band had been entirely formed by his counsels and example.

As may be anticipated, Boudon not only led on his young associates to share his love of Mary and his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, as well as to cultivate a spirit of prayer and mortification, but succeeded in imbuing their hearts with his own tender compassion for the poor. Indeed, we should be almost tempted to regard many of their acts as excessive and indiscreet, had not results served to justify them, and thus forced us to regard them in the light of those holy imprudences upon which it pleases God often to set the seal of His approbation. Young Boudon, pressed by the charity which burned in his breast, would sometimes rise from his bed in the night, and, calling one or two of his best friends to accompany him, would go forth into the streets to see if perchance any unhappy creature might be wandering about homeless and houseless. If he had the good fortune to meet with such an one—and he could hardly fail of success in a large town like Rouen—he would take him to his own room, and there, kneeling down, would wash the poor man's feet and wipe them with the hair of his head, which was very long and beautiful. This done, he would actually drink, with far less repugnance than is excited in us by the bare mention of such an act, some of the dirty water in the basin, not merely sipping it, but taking long draughts. Then, after

feeding his guest with a portion of his own slender fare, he would resign his bed to him and pass the remainder of the night either stretched on the bare floor or occupied in prayer. When morning came, he would waken the sleeper, catechise him with the utmost zeal and kindness, and bid him go in peace. Boudon himself, when reflecting fifty years later on this practice, could not sufficiently bless Providence for having averted every evil consequence which might have ensued ; for there seemed no small risk attendant upon boys being at liberty to open the doors to strangers and vagrants at midnight, who, while their young benefactors slept, might have robbed the house and made off. Nothing of the kind ever occurred, nor did any of the household complain of what was done ; neither did M. Duhavel object. "What is done from charity," observes Boudon, "is always well done : " a sentiment which apparently the good priest must also have entertained. "Happy forgetfulness," he adds, "which makes us lose sight of our own interests to think only of the interests of Jesus Christ."

Henri Boudon was, even at that tender age, so absorbed in God that he saw nothing but God only in creatures. He was already so advanced in contemplation that he often passed whole nights in prayer, and the sun which left him on his knees would find him still in the same posture when it illuminated the eastern horizon. He was convinced that he owed this grace of prayer to his dear Queen and Mistress, as well as his love for the Adorable Eucharist. His faith was so vivid in that transcendent mystery, that it seemed as if the veil were raised from before his eyes, and he beheld his Lord invested with glory and surrounded by adoring angels. He communicated as often as permission was

granted him, and from an early hour of the morning spent all the time at his disposal before the Tabernacle; nay, we have seen that he often passed the best part of the night also as near to the Blessed Sacrament as was possible when church doors were closed, and would have continued to do so had not obedience to his confessor constrained him to renounce the practice.

If the good M. Duhavel looked with an indulgent eye on the pious indiscretions of his boarders, they derived encouragement also in their works of mercy from P. Gaspart, their Jesuit teacher. Assembling them in his room, he would exhort them to persevere in the service of God, and warn them against the dangers of the world; the surest preservative from which, he told them, was to be found in devotion to the incomparable Virgin and to those loving Intelligences of whom she is the Queen. Accordingly, he was ever exhorting them to place their utmost confidence in their protection; and so great was the fervour with which these youths followed his paternal counsels that their teacher was inspired with such a veneration for them that he never addressed them but with head uncovered, and would thus accompany them to the door of the college when they left him. Disconcerted by a token of respect so unusual in one who was both a priest of God and their instructor, they begged Boudon to entreat him to spare them this confusion, to which the Father replied, in words which his hearer never forgot, that by that act he desired to honour their guardian angels. There can be little doubt but that P. Gaspart's veneration for these glorious spirits served to foster that of Boudon, whose great devotion to the holy angels must be

familiar to all who have the slightest acquaintance with his writings ; but what, perhaps, may not be so well known is that there is not a single letter of his remaining which does not bear a striking testimony to it. As in our day persons are in the habit of finishing their letters by sending affectionate remembrances to the relatives or friends of those whom they are addressing, or expressions of duty and respect to those who have a claim on such sentiments, so Boudon, naturally and, one may say, as a matter of course, concludes his letters by saluting the tutelary angels of those to whom he writes, and commonly also of their friends, as well as the heavenly guardians of the localities in which they reside.

The spiritual calm which Henri enjoyed during his early years was not to continue. The solidity of his piety was to be tried by interior sufferings, and that at an age when God usually continues to allure by the sweetness of His favours. Dark clouds began to gather over him, and the devil was allowed to assail him with temptations more terrible to his pure soul than would death itself have been. God seemed to have withdrawn His face, and the heaven above was as brass. If for a moment a ray of light pierced through the gloom, it was but a flash, which was speedily extinguished. This state was to last more or less for some years, but it never disturbed the peace of his soul's sanctuary, that centre which is beyond the reach of storms and agitation, and of which he afterwards knew so well how to speak. Thither he retired, as into a citadel, however great might be the disturbance in the inferior region ; and it is remarkable that his application to his studies did not suffer the least abatement, and that during the whole of this time he was

one of the first in his class. He never varied in the confidence which he placed in our Blessed Lady, and if this good Mother did not arrest the floods which assailed him, she never suffered him for a moment to be submerged by them, or to receive the slightest stain from the evil imaginations with which the malignity of the demons infested him. So angelic was the purity of this youth that a single word of levity was enough to make the blood mantle in his cheek, while the look of almost divine rebuke which he would give speedily brought the blush of shame to the face of him who had uttered it.

About this time Henri underwent a painful mortification, which may be viewed as a sort of foretaste of that which was to be the great trial of his life; a calumny on the subject of the virtue which was most dear and precious in his eyes. There were some ill-disposed youths, several years his seniors, in M. Duhavel's establishment, who regarded their pious fellow-student with anything but a friendly feeling, because his virtue was a reproof to their viciousness. It has ever been so, as Holy Writ bears witness. The just man is "grievous" to the wicked "even to behold; for his life," they say, "is not like other men's, and his ways are very different. We are esteemed by him as triflers, and he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness." * So thought Boudon's companions, and they began to decry him as a hypocrite and take every opportunity of ridiculing and insulting him. Nothing would have given these licentious youths greater pleasure than to be able to unmask him, as they would have called it, and prove him to be no better, or perhaps worse, than themselves. But,

* Wisdom ii. 15, 16.

as it was vain to lie in wait for him, it was needful to invent a charge. The opportunity presented itself on the occasion of some of their number having acted in a grossly indecorous manner in a public promenade of the town. This disgraceful behaviour was reported to M. Duhavel by a casual eyewitness. The guilty company all agreed to name Boudon as the prime leader in the affair, and M. Duhavel, yielding credit to their united testimony, punished the innocent youth very severely for an offence which his soul abhorred. He afterwards discovered his mistake, and learned that the accused was not even present when the incident occurred.

But these bad youths did not hate Boudon solely because he was virtuous, but also because his virtue was an obstacle to the gratification of their own vicious inclinations. This was exemplified, in particular, in the case of Louise Henri, a young widow who had entered M. Duhavel's service. Her parents were Calvinists, and she still belonged to the sect. Boudon regarded her with compassion, and soon observed that she was also the object of attention to some of his fellow-boarders, but from far other motives. Louise Henri, naturally modest and good, repulsed their advances, but Boudon, fearful of what might follow, was always on the watch to guard her against evil. As holidays were the most dangerous times, the students being then at liberty, Boudon used to forego his own recreation and stay at home to act as sentinel. Louise, grateful for his protection and admiring the charity and purity of the angelic youth, was disposed to listen to him when he spoke to her of the errors in which she had been reared, and, notwithstanding all her prejudices, was at last persuaded by him to speak

to the Jesuit Fathers. Her conversion was the result, and she became a firm and fervent Catholic. Boudon never lost sight of M^{me}. Henri, and we find him through life assisting her in all her needs, both temporal and spiritual. How complete was the confidence she reposed in his direction may be gathered from a passage in one of her letters to him, still extant in manuscript. "I would rather," she says, "sacrifice life a thousand times than take any step against your will." Many letters which Boudon wrote to her have been preserved, and the confidence which he in return reposed in her is evidenced by his constantly informing her of the good works he had in hand and begging her prayers to aid them. Poor in this world's goods, Louise Henri was rich in grace, and under his saintly guidance seems to have attained to a high degree of perfection.

Besides his interior pains, and the persecution to which he was subjected by his fellow-students, Boudon had soon to endure another trial most distressing in itself and deeply embarrassing in its consequences. The scanty supply of provisions which his stepfather had hitherto allowed him ceased altogether, and by and by even his pension at M. Duhavel's was no longer paid. Meanwhile, his mother and the tyrant she had given herself were living on money bequeathed by his father, to a share of which the son was in every way entitled. It became now a necessity that Boudon should leave M. Duhavel's establishment; but where was he to go? He had relatives of good family living in easy circumstances in the town of Rouen, but, being determined to make no complaint of his mother or stepfather, he did not like to apply to those who would have been sure to take up his cause when they became acquainted with his situation, and would probably have

insisted on the adoption of measures to secure his just rights. Nor would such a course have been liable to censure, for the principles of natural justice as well as legal obligations were violated in his case, but Boudon looked at the question with the eyes of a saint; and instead of reflecting on the wrong which was done him, he considered his desolate and indigent state as a grace vouchsafed to him by the loving mercy of God, inasmuch as it was a fresh call to cast himself unreservedly on His care. Indeed, we have reason to think that it was at this epoch of his life he made that complete abandonment of himself and of all which concerned him into the arms of Divine Providence, and began to experience in so striking a manner Its special protection on all occasions; a favour to which we find him making constant allusion, particularly in his letters.

There was a certain M. Le Tanneur, a retired Secretary of State, residing at Rouen, who devoted part of his fortune to the assistance of poor and deserving students, receiving them under his roof and admitting them to his table. Boudon resolved upon taking the humiliating step of having recourse to this good man's charity. He went to him accordingly, and, candidly stating how he was situated, solicited in his own behalf the kindness which had been shown to many others. M. Le Tanneur was pleased with his applicant, and at once acceded to his request. He and his family soon learned to appreciate the guest whom they had charitably received, and discovered that unawares they had consented to entertain an angel; sentiments which time only served to fortify.

CHAPTER III.

BOUDON'S RESIDENCE WITH M. LE TANNEUR AND
HIS REMOVAL TO PARIS.

M. LE TANNEUR introduced young Boudon to friends of his own, like-minded with himself, and, amongst them, to a M. and M^{me}. de Brébion, who were equally struck with the virtue of the youth, and from that time took the warmest interest in his welfare. The estimation in which he was held by this family is proved by a letter written to Boudon some years later by a sister of M^{me}. de Brébion, a nun at Rouen, in which we find her, not only begging him in terms of deep respect to labour for the sanctification of her family, but even consulting him on the state of her own soul; and this is the more remarkable when we remember that she was addressing, not a priest or a religious, but a secular, and him a very young man. While Boudon dwelt under M. Le Tanneur's roof he must have made his first acquaintance with that holy man, M. de Bernières. Boudon would be likely to meet him at M. de Brébion's house, which seems to have been contiguous to that of a relative and namesake of M. de Bernières; * and, no doubt, the friendship which was

* Some manuscript letters, addressed to Boudon while still a secular, have this superscription: "At M. Brébion's, near the house of M. de Bernières, at Rouen."

one day to unite them so closely, and to which we shall hereafter allude, took its origin now.

Relieved from temporal necessities and free to dispose of his leisure hours as he pleased, Boudon gave himself up afresh to prayer, mortification, and good works with all that intensity of soul which characterised him, and which all his life long was concentrated on one absorbing object; for Boudon's heart was like a closed furnace which allowed none of its heat to escape or suffer diminution. His penitential spirit was so strong, that even in the early days of his school life, with the exception of Sundays and festivals, or on occasions when he had to dine in company, bread and water were his sole food. He disciplined himself till the blood streamed down to the floor of his room, which thus betrayed the severity with which he chastised his body. His firmness where the interests of God were concerned was so unbending, that neither ridicule, insults, nor ill-usage could make him quail; yet his heart was so tender that the mere thought of the loss of souls was able to draw abundant tears from his eyes. The ardour of his love for poverty made him think seriously of entering the Order of St. Francis. So strong, indeed, was his attraction, that he was a hundred times on the point of binding himself by a vow to do so, but some secret impression, the source of which he could not well understand, always withheld him. Time explained the mystery. The delicacy of his health, which had been further impaired by his rigorous mortifications, offered an invincible obstacle to his admission into the Order, as he was assured on good authority. Few things could either grieve or disappoint a soul so disengaged. This decision did, however, pain him, and he retired into a room apart, where

he indulged in a good fit of tears. "*J'y pleurai de la bonne manière*" is the unaffected and strong expression he uses when speaking of his sorrow; nevertheless, he considered that his good Mother made it up to him, and did not suffer his intention to be substantially frustrated, for by the disposition of Providence, as he observed in after years, he had ever lived poor. "I live," he writes, "only on alms, not having a farthing of revenue; and I value this, I assure you, more than I should the possession of all the riches of the earth. And in this wise, Providence has made me a religious of St. Francis without having ever worn his habit."

But, while thus closing the Order against him, God was pleased to show His approbation of the desire of His servant by giving him remarkable lights with regard to its holy founder, of whom he was thus enabled to speak in a marvellous manner. Boudon frequently took long solitary walks into the country. Some charitable errand was commonly his immediate object, but it is also apparent from his own language that he loved to converse with God alone in the midst of His works, in which he always beheld Him as through a transparent veil. "It is a sweet joy," he says in one of his writings,* "when I am in the country, and walking through a wood, or along a garden alley, to call to mind that these places are full of God; that we exist, that we walk, in the Divinity; and then from time to time pay Him acts of adoration." Once it so happened that darkness surprised him in a wood far from home, and as he began to look about for some place where he could pass the night, he found himself at the gate of a gentleman's château. He entered, and humbly begged some of the servants whom

* *Règne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale*, l. i. c. 6.

he found in the poultry-yard to let him sleep in the barn ; he wanted no supper. Meanwhile the owner of the mansion and his wife were sitting at table, where they were entertaining a Provincial of the Capuchins and his companion. Hearing of the poor student and his modest request, they had him brought in, and gave him something to eat by the fireside. By and by the conversation turned on St. Francis and the constitutions of his Order. Turning to their young guest, his hosts asked him what he thought of that mode of life, and pressed him to give his opinion. Upon this, Boudon began to speak, and in a manner so beautiful and sublime that his hearers listened entranced, and seemed to behold in him, not a man, still less a poor young scholar, but an angel who had assumed human form to address them in the language of Heaven. They all confessed that they had never heard anything like it, and the Provincial, to whom, as may be supposed, the panegyric of his founder was no new topic, was perhaps the most astounded of the party.

Although not called to be actually the disciple and son of him of whom he could speak so divinely, it pleased God, as we have seen, to inspire young Boudon with the desire to live in the world as if he truly belonged to the Seraphic Order, which had possessed such strong attractions for him. Henceforth he may be said to have been, as it were, clothed with the spirit of poverty, of mortification, and of sacrifice. He resolved to begin life anew, a life spiritually cloistered, a life hidden in Jesus, so far as the interests of God's glory should permit. Unable to give himself to God by solemn vows sanctioned by the Church, he determined to make up for this loss as far as he could by an entire dedication of himself to His service. After

invoking, as witnesses of the compact he was about to make, the Blessed Virgin, the holy angels, the special saint of his devotion, St. John the Evangelist, and all the Blessed in Heaven, he prostrated himself before the Most Holy Sacrament, and there promised to observe the commandments of God in every particular, and to suffer a thousand deaths rather than violate any one of them. He joined to this promise a solemn vow of chastity, which he had, at least by implication, already made when, while yet a child, he had engaged himself to follow the example of his dear patron, St. John, in all things. After this he consecrated himself entirely to the Blessed Virgin, making over to her, as her property, all his good actions and thoughts, all the fruits of grace in his soul, past and future, that she might apply them as she willed. He also offered her his soul itself, that, after God, she might be its mistress and protectress; and in order to render his resolutions the more firm and binding, he signed them with his blood. This act of his was performed on the octave day of the Assumption, in the year 1641, when he was seventeen years of age.

It was in these fervent sentiments, and fortified by solemn resolutions and vows to persevere in the strait way of perfection, that Henri Boudon, having now concluded his course of humanities at Rouen, determined to go and study philosophy and theology at Paris. He was, no doubt, encouraged by both M. Le Tanneur and M. de Brébion in this decision, and they also appear to have furnished him with some small pecuniary aid; indeed, without assistance, he could not even have made the journey to the capital. This money, however, was not sufficient to maintain him very long, and he was well aware that he should soon

find himself in the great city without either resources or patron ; but his confidence in Providence was so firmly rooted that it never allowed him to fear for a single moment that he should be left in want of what he absolutely needed. He was in this respect like the babe in its mother's arms, only he had that confidence consciously and on reflection which the infant possesses unwittingly and by instinct.

His first solicitude on arriving in Paris was to find a good director, and he was led to address himself to Père Bagot,* at the College of Clermont. This Father was at that time director of almost all the youths who at Paris, as we have seen them at Rouen, were cultivating piety under the guidance of the Jesuits. Boudon could not have made a better choice, for, according to his testimony—and he must be allowed to have been a good judge—P. Bagot possessed consummate prudence and great experimental knowledge, and had besides a peculiar talent for the spiritual direction of youth. So strong was his attraction to that special employment that, being selected as confessor to Louis XIII., and having entered on this responsible office, he seized the earliest opportunity to resign it and return to his dear scholars. The Court, indeed, was as distasteful to him as his humbler sphere was congenial, and he was frequently heard to say, "If any one introduces you into the Court by the door, make your escape by the

* Jean Bagot, born at Rennes in 1580, held the office of Regent in different colleges, and subsequently that of Theologian to the General of the Order at Rome. He was afterwards made Rector of the Professed House at Paris. About the year 1640 he directed a congregation of students at the College of La Flèche, and afterwards formed one still more remarkable for its fervour at the College of Clermont, which later was styled the College of Louis le Grand. He died at Paris in 1664.

windows. For the air of the Court, which is poisonous to all, is still more so to a religious." He was not only a man of much erudition, but he was learned in the science of the saints; and his love for souls, especially those of the young, would make him at any moment willingly quit his studies, in order to give his time, and often a very considerable portion of it, to some very young boy who was anxious to consult him. His humility was exceedingly striking. Forward in commending others, but abhorring any praise of himself, he was so little attached to his own opinion that he would often readily adopt in preference that of one of his juvenile scholars.

Such is, in brief, the description given of him by Boudon. If the tree is known by its fruits, the master may be said to be known by his disciples, and from the school of P. Bagot proceeded men whom, as Collet justly observes, the Church would doubtless enroll among the saints if she could confer this distinction on all who have deserved it. It may suffice to allude to Père Jogues, of the Society of Jesus, who, urged by his zeal for souls to embrace the life of a missionary among the heathen, suffered martyrdom in Canada amidst tortures such as the savage Indian is alone capable of inventing. Many bishops of Canada, China, Cochin-China, and Tonquin had been also formed by this gifted director to walk in the ways of perfection and glorify God in their lives, as Père Jogues in his death. These holy men, not to speak of others nearer home, who edified the Church by their Apostolic zeal and eminent virtues, the Père Bagot regarded in his old age as his joy and his crown. The perfect detachment of this good religious must have made him thoroughly appreciate the young penitent who now

placed himself under his direction, while he, on his part, revered P. Bagot's counsels as the voice of God to him, and, after his death, used to cite his words as oracles of truth. One frequent saying of P. Bagot's, itself a quotation from the *Imitation of Christ*, Boudon specially loved to recall: "*Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari.*"* It must be confessed that Boudon faithfully followed this piece of advice.

Next to a good director Boudon valued the advantage of pious associates. Such he found in a knot of young men who used to meet together in a house in the Rue de la Harpe, dividing their time between study and devotional exercises. When the slight assistance which Boudon had received from his friends was well-nigh exhausted he was reduced to great straits, greater even than he had ever experienced at Rouen. How economically he lived we learn casually from a letter to M. Thomas,† an intimate friend in after life, in which he mentions that his weekly personal expenditure at this time amounted only to twenty sous, or one franc. After all due allowance for difference in the value of money and the price of the necessaries of life in those days, this could have been only sufficient to keep him alive. P. Bagot had suspected the poverty of his disciple, and would willingly have afforded him some relief, but Boudon never complained, and was adverse to soliciting friends on his

* "Love to be unknown and to be reputed as nothing."—B. i. c. ii.

† Counsellor of the Châtelet at Paris. He also refers to the same subject in a letter to M. Bosguérard. M. Thomas wrote one of the early biographies of Boudon; and Collet, who considered it very valuable on account of the intimate acquaintance he had with him, says that he made large use of it for his own work.

behalf ; and so accustomed are even the charitable to give to those who ask of them rather than diligently to inquire into the circumstances of those who make no appeal to their compassion, nay, perhaps, who shrink from allowing their wants to be known, that the indigence to which the young student was reduced was entirely overlooked. It was from no feeling of pride, however, that he thus abstained from requesting friends to assist him in his necessities, for we find him submitting to the far greater humiliation of publicly asking alms. Indeed, it was probably on this very account that he preferred this method, for in writing to the above-mentioned friend he dwells with a species of relish on the particulars ; telling him how one Christmas Eve he begged at the door of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, standing among the mendicants who were collected there for the same purpose ; how he was rebuffed by a person of quality ; and how afterwards, on entering the Cathedral, he received to the amount of two-thirds of a sou, which was all that he obtained in alms that day.

As Providence did not seem to favour this mode of supplying his wants, he at last made known his exceeding destitution to a M. Desponts, who, it would appear, either belonged to the small Congregation (as such associations were called) which Boudon frequented, or, at least, was well acquainted with its members. This gentleman gave Boudon thirty sous, and promised to acquaint his associates with the circumstances of their companion ; which, considering that Boudon was a leading member of the Congregation, ought naturally to have excited a lively interest. Days passed, however, without any result, these gentlemen never alluding to the subject or asking him any question

concerning his affairs and means of living. Yet every day he was in their company; they used often to invite him to dinner at their houses, or would take him to their gardens in the suburbs of Paris; secular as he was, and quite a youth, some of them would even lay open their consciences to him; they visited the poor together, and if Boudon recommended any in particular to their charity, they readily gave; but to *him* they gave nothing, seeming to remain utterly insensible to his condition, although it had been brought before their notice. Now, here is Boudon's explanation. It is remarkable as throwing a striking light on one of those traits which distinguished him, his devotion to Divine Providence and his perfect reliance on Its loving care. Providence was his explanation of everything, and so simply was his eye always fixed on this overruling Power, that the idea of scrutinising the motives of any, still less of censuring them if they acted neglectfully or unkindly in his regard, never appears so much as to have suggested itself to his mind. He had six francs still remaining when he mentioned his poverty to M. Desponts, but his possession of this small sum—and small, indeed, it would have been reckoned by those who abounded in means—was known only to himself and to God. It was to him, however, as we have seen, a provision for yet six weeks more. Six weeks accordingly elapsed, and precisely as he came to the end of his store, a sudden anxiety about his temporal concerns arose among his companions, who hastened to tender him their assistance.

Whether, however, it were owing to the backwardness of Boudon in speaking of his necessities,—for possibly he never explained that his poverty or, rather,

his complete destitution, was his normal state and not a mere accidental occurrence,—or to a special disposition of Providence, it is clear that before long he was suffering similar privations. He fell ill, and lay for some days utterly neglected and uncared for on his poor pallet. At last M. Dubachet, an old gentleman who was in the habit of attending the pious exercises of the Congregation, and who had been often struck by the heavenly recollection of this youth, missed him and inquired where he was. This question roused the apprehensions of Boudon's associates, who then sought him out, and found him in his wretched lodging prostrated by fever, and in want of the commonest necessaries of life, but at the same time, not only resigned, but in a state of such complete and childlike abandonment to the good pleasure of God, that their admiration was as much excited as their compassion. The directors of the Congregation at once gave orders that he should be tended as one of their dearest children; but this injunction was not needed, for his young friends vied with each other in personally nursing him and giving him every attention. They were well rewarded for their services in the edification they received. His sick-bed was a school of sanctity to them. His patience, his tranquillity, his piety, and the fervour of his expressions when speaking of the God who alone filled his heart, stimulated them to imitation. In the intimacy into which their new relations brought them, Boudon often spoke to them of his fellow-students at Rouen, and of the happiness they experienced in putting their prayers and good works, as it were, into a common stock, and together striving to advance in perfection and in the practice of all the Christian virtues. These conversations moved

the most devout of their number to entertain the idea of uniting in a kind of community, in which they might each profit by the graces of all, and lead a life similar to what Boudon described. Their director, P. Bagot, was spoken to on the subject, and he cordially encouraged the project and aided them by his counsels in carrying it out. Having discerned in young Boudon, ever since he arrived at Paris, all the qualities which would fit him to be the leader and head of this little band, he selected him for the post. None, indeed, could be better, or so well, qualified as was this saintly youth to train his companions to become the models, as P. Bagot hoped they might prove, to all similar congregations in the capital.

It was in the Rue Copeau, in the faubourg St. Marcel, that the young friends first fixed their abode. Many of them were of distinguished birth, and possessed ample means, but they took no account of these differences and put all they had in a common purse. Boudon, poor to destitution, unknown, unacknowledged by any relative or patron, inspired them with such esteem and veneration that they not only joyfully conceded to him the headship, but committed everything into his hands, so that he was constituted at once their superior and their temporal administrator. The sole use he made of the authority thus entrusted to him was to lead them on in the same path which we have seen him and his companions treading at Rouen, a path of self-abnegation and of charity, teaching them to be no misers of themselves, but to adore God with their whole being, who not only had bestowed that being upon them, but had given Himself also to them. He made it one of his chief objects to inspire them with the spirit of interior mortification, without which

piety is more or less illusory, and is sure not to endure. He taught them to treat each other with every mark of regard and affection, every one considering himself as entirely devoted to the service and welfare of the rest, and this without any expectation of return ; a duty which through his influence came to be considered as one of the first among the obligations of the infant society. But, on the other hand, human respect and the fear of men's opinions were to be utterly set at nought. So eagerly did these young men enter into the sentiments of their leader, that we find them not only contemning the world's contempt, but often even provoking it by publicly performing acts which involved much self-humiliation.

If, however, the fervour of these youths sometimes made them the objects of raillery, it more often won them esteem. This, indeed, was clearly manifested when their increasing numbers forced them to leave their first home in the Rue Copeau and establish themselves in that of St. Dominique, the inhabitants of the quarter, who had given them the name of the Society of Good Friends, loudly testifying their regret at seeing them depart. They now began to form themselves after the pattern of a regular community. Rules were drawn up, and, after having been put to the vote and accepted, were submitted to P. Bagot for his approval. Fixed hours for rising and going to bed, meal-times and recreation, for study, for prayer, for conferences, and, generally speaking, for all their spiritual exercises and good works, were not only prescribed but strictly observed ; so that their house resembled more a college of Apostolic men than an association of students. When they made a pilgrimage of devotion, as was their common practice, they passed along the

streets keeping perfect silence, so that, to see them, one might have imagined them so many anchorites emerged from their solitude to edify the world by the spectacle of their modesty and recollection; and the sight did, in fact, give great edification, although the object was rather to honour God and sanctify their own souls than to produce a profitable impression. This was unquestionably a model Congregation; with Boudon for a leader it enjoyed exceptional advantages; moreover, its members lived in community, instead of having only their appointed times of meeting, like other Congregationalists. Still, these numerous associations were all more or less nurseries and centres of piety, and being alike devoted to all the works of mercy, whether corporal or spiritual, must have exercised a most beneficial influence in Paris and in the large provincial towns where they were established. The Jesuit Fathers were the chief promoters and directors of these powerful agencies for good, and, if for this reason alone, it would be difficult to estimate the loss which the interests of religion in France sustained, especially in regard to the educating and training of youth, by the expulsion of the Order in the middle of the following century.

It will be anticipated that Boudon was unremitting in his endeavour to inspire his companions with a deep devotion to her whom he loved to call his dear mistress, the Virgin Mother of God. Amongst all the pious exercises calculated to promote veneration and love of Mary, none was more highly esteemed by him than the *cultus* of her Holy and Immaculate Heart. Those who are conversant with Boudon's writings will know what a strenuous champion he was of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception,—one of his works

being specially devoted to the subject,—but his zeal for its propagation is also most strongly evidenced in his letters. How repeatedly do we find him signing himself as “Boudon, the poor priest of the Admirable Mother of God, ever Virgin, and Immaculate in her most holy Conception: truths for which I would, with the Divine aid, willingly die!” It was with the greatest joy, then, that he saw, at the period of which we are speaking, devotion to her Holy Heart—that devotion of which the great prerogative of her Immaculate Conception is the root and principle—propagated by Père Eudes* in spite of much opposition from a certain party and the backwardness of many faint-hearted Catholics—a class always deplorably numerous—whom that opposition intimidated and thus converted into practical adversaries. Boudon successfully laboured to instil into the minds of his young associates a tender devotion to this compassionate Heart, and to make them recognise in it the channel of all heavenly graces and benedictions. Accordingly, the feast of the Heart of Mary was kept as one of the chief festivals of the Congregation, and Boudon caused a picture representing the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary surrounded by adoring angels, with this inscription, *Cor Jesu et Mariæ cœtus nostri gloria*,† to be hung up in their hall of meeting, of which it was the sole ornament, thus engrossing the whole attention of those who entered. Moreover, they made a practice

* P. Eudes was a native of Lower Normandy; he studied at the Jesuits' college at Rouen, and in 1623 joined the Congregation of the Oratory, which he left in 1643 to found the Institution called after his name. He also founded the Order of Notre Dame de Charité du Refuge, and that of Notre Dame de Charité du Bon-Pasteur. Père Eudes was declared Venerable in 1874.

† “Heart of Jesus and Mary the glory of our society.”

of venerating it by genuflexions and pious ejaculations, and daily repeated before it the Litanies in honour of Mary which the great propagator of devotion to her Holy Heart, P. Eudes, had composed.

One of the chief duties which the society had imposed upon itself was application to works of mercy. Their own frugal way of living left considerable means at their disposal for the relief of the necessitous, and the good training which they had received fitted them also to minister valuable spiritual aid ; a capacity which is often wanting in the benefactors of the poor. Paris at that time offered a vast field for the exercise of Christian charity. War and famine had prodigiously swelled the indigent population of that city, and it was daily increased by influx from the provinces of starving peasants and artisans, who hoped to have a better chance of obtaining employment, or, if not, bread at least, in the capital. Thus the tide of pauperism rose every day, and now another wave of misery invaded it in the form of numbers of fugitives of all classes from Lorraine, whom the frightful devastation of that unhappy country had driven from their homes in a state of most complete destitution. God, it is true, raised up an angel of charity in those sad times, St. Vincent de Paul, whose beneficent hands were stretched out for the relief, not of Lorraine only, but of the whole of France. What can be accomplished by one man, when that man is a saint, his life abundantly exemplifies. In the midst of all this distress, our young associates, as it may be conceived, found full employment for their zeal and self-sacrifice ; and so admirably did they perform the work to which they had devoted themselves that Boudon, referring, towards the close of his life, to his former companions, told a

friend of his, a priest of the Seminary of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet, that he did not hesitate to aver that in the splendid examples of the evangelical spirit which they exhibited, they could hardly have been surpassed by an Ignatius or a Francis Xavier in the infancy of their great institute.

CHAPTER IV.

BOUDON'S LIFE IN PARIS FROM HIS EIGHTEENTH TO HIS TWENTY-FOURTH YEAR.

It was a harrowing spectacle of starvation and misery which the mass of wretchedness collected in Paris presented to the eye of this compassionate youth, but his heart was filled with affliction far more poignant when he discovered, as was often the case, that the victims were labouring under a privation infinitely more grievous, being sunk in the grossest ignorance of the saving mysteries of the faith. Yet in the midst of this spiritual penury, unfortunately too common, he was frequently refreshed and consoled by the sight of the Christian patience and resignation of the sufferers. There was one man in particular whose virtues Boudon has commemorated in one of his works,* and whose eminent sanctity was the joy of his heart. This was Claude le Glay, commonly known as Brother Claude, a native of Lorraine, and an artisan, whom Boudon associated with himself in many of his works of mercy. Having been despoiled of all that he possessed, he betook himself with his family to the fields, where they picked up their sustenance for some months like

* *Le Saint Esclavage de l'Admirable Mère de Dieu.*

the ravens whom God feeds. When they were fortunate enough to discover some edible root or herb, they would all kneel down to thank God for thus mercifully providing for their needs. Reduced to the last extremity, they were finally constrained to seek refuge in Paris. Here Claude became known to Boudon, who lent him some clothes at a time when he had literally none but the shirt on his back, for, having gone out into the country, he had been robbed and cruelly stripped by some German soldiers. Claude was of a kindred spirit with his benefactor, who tells us how he came to him late one night reduced almost to a state of nudity, yet nevertheless full of joy. It would seem also as if, like Boudon, he was favoured with the special care of Divine Providence, for the next day he returned clad in a good suit of clothes, fitting him perfectly, which a stranger had bestowed upon him, bidding him not inquire whence he came.

We learn also from Boudon that Claude had often told him that, poor as he was, he hated money, so that, from aversion, he always put out of sight the bag containing the alms he received, as something loathsome. The same instinctive repugnance to seeing or handling money is related of more than one saint, and in particular of the great St. Charles Borromeo. People were often unaccountably moved to give alms to this devout waiter on Providence. A gentleman of distinction—probably through the interest which Boudon made for him with friends—bestowed on his daughter a marriage portion, and his wife was provided with an asylum in a religious community. Claude now lived for some time with a master-workman of his own trade, whom God was pleased to bless on his account, as heretofore He prospered the house of Putiphar for the

sake of Joseph who was serving him. By Boudon's advice he placed himself under the direction of P. de Condé, a Jesuit Father at the College of Clermont, whose deep spirituality, little understood by some, had a singular attraction for those who were called to walk in paths of exalted perfection. To them his words were like burning coals setting their hearts on fire. The very sight of him, as he made the sign of the cross after mounting the pulpit, seemed to minister such grace to them that, before he opened his lips, they felt themselves carried away by the impetuous streams of divine love which flooded their souls. Doubtless Boudon, whose humility makes him prefer to speak in the third person, was describing his own personal experience when thus recording the effects of the holy Jesuit's preaching. Claude had a singular veneration for this good Father, whom he asserted that he had more than once been supernaturally illuminated to behold close to our Lord upon the Cross. Under this Father's direction, and aided by the counsels of Boudon, Claude made the most wonderful progress in grace, and as his heart became more and more filled with God, his tongue became so divinely eloquent that his fame began to spread abroad and attract to him a crowd of listeners. On Sundays and holidays, when he was not engaged at his work, there might be seen in front of his master's house a long line of carriages belonging to persons of quality, who had come to hear this unlettered man discourse so sublimely of the love of God and the magnificence of the Divine perfections. It was with much regret that his employer parted with him, but it was thought well to remove him from this position, in order to place him with a holy priest, M. Gauffre, who carried on the good works which the

celebrated Père Bernard had commenced. After M. Gauffre's death he was provided with an honourable retreat in the Seminary of St. Sulpice, where he lived to a great age.

Boudon gives us many interesting particulars concerning Brother Claude. He used to spend the greater part of his nights in prayer, and towards morning would often retire to one of the abandoned quarries in the vicinity of Paris, there to pass the whole day in contemplation. Returning home in the evening, he would content himself with a frugal meal of bread and water. He declined everything which might seem to savour of seeking diversion in creatures, and Boudon says that, when walking in the country together with a few other friends, he has observed him silently slip away from the party and retrace his steps. This proceeded from his close application to God, and not from any moroseness of temper, for he was naturally of a lively and agreeable turn. Boudon relates a remarkable incident which proved how pleasing to God was this spirit of self-denial. Having been invited one day by an intimate friend to dine with him, he refused from the love of mortification, and went to the church of Notre Dame, where he spent some time in prayer to our Lady, his dear Mother and Mistress. On his return he was amazed at finding his table spread with a fair white cloth and an excellent repast served thereon. Thinking that he might be the victim of an illusion, he betook himself to prayer; but after a while, perceiving that the viands still remained, he gave God thanks, and partook of what had been provided for him. When he had finished the rest disappeared. "So true is it," observes Boudon, "that the Lord is good to those who love Him, not only providing them

with what is needful, but even with what is agreeable, as He did at the marriage-feast of Cana in Galilee.' Claude's abstraction of mind, or, rather, its elevation to God, caused him frequent accidents. In the midst of the crowded streets of Paris he saw nothing, and, what was worse, heard nothing, neither the sound of approaching vehicles, nor the shouts of the drivers bidding him to get out of the way ; he was consequently often knocked down and seriously bruised, but, apparently, he was never the worse for these bodily injuries. "Having no surgeon but Divine Providence," says Boudon, "he used to find himself cured immediately." His ecstasies and raptures, however, were so continual as to interfere considerably with his freedom of action, which induced his friends to beseech our Lord to remove them ; and these prayers seem to have been heard, at least so far as respected their frequency and publicity.

One of P. Bagot's chief objects in the direction of the Congregation of which our Boudon was what we may call the superior, was to encourage the members to use all their endeavours to recall to the practice of virtue those among their late companions who had strayed from its paths, as well as to fortify in a salutary decision such as were hesitating between that false liberty which the world holds out as a seduction to the young, and the austere precepts of the Gospel. In many instances the efforts of these young Apostles were crowned with success, but, on the other hand, as so often happens in like cases, their charitable zeal excited irritation in the ill-disposed. We have seen how Boudon's fellow-scholars at Rouen were chafed and angered at the mere presence of so much virtue among them ; it was a standing rebuke to themselves, provoking them to calumniate and persecute him.

And so it fared with these young men. Their good works were first assailed with ridicule ; then their intentions were maligned ; soon, more serious assaults were devised, and defamatory papers, entitled *Contra Bagotianos*, were circulated both in Paris and in the provinces. From their tenour it might have been imagined that the State and the whole fabric of society were menaced by these young alumni of the Jesuits. But the time had not yet come when such falsehoods could obtain credit, and the very name of Père Bagot, with which the conspirators had ventured to head these libels, a name held in universal respect, was alone sufficient to justify the conduct and proceedings of his disciples. The storm, therefore, speedily blew over.

The exercise of a beneficial influence was not, however, the sole result which P. Bagot looked for from the Congregation under his charge. It was impossible for him to consider the eminent gifts with which so many of its members were endowed, and the union of so much power, spiritual and intellectual, in one body, without hoping that God had further designs in their regard and some great work to accomplish through their means. No religious Order has laboured so abundantly as the Jesuits in the field of missionary enterprise, and none more successfully. It has been an Apostolate ever dear to their hearts, and one in which they have freely shed their blood. Père Alexandre de Rhodes, a Father of the Society, having just returned from the Indies with the object of seeking out ecclesiastics who might be willing to share the labours and perils of that mission, P. Bagot spoke to him of his young Congregationalists, and to them of P. de Rhodes. They listened with deep interest, and the thought of this holy priest renouncing

his country, traversing the seas, and devoting himself to martyrdom, in order to carry the faith to Pagan nations, filled them with enthusiasm, and inspired them with a strong desire to hear from his own lips the story of his labours and sufferings. P. Bagot willingly favoured their wishes, and accordingly brought P. de Rhodes one day to dine with the community. The plot, if it was a plot, was eminently successful, for these youths were so touched by the picture which their guest drew of thousands of poor infidels only waiting for the preaching of the Gospel to open their eyes to the truth and forsake their idolatry, and, above all, were so transported by the prospect of martyrdom, that supreme ambition of generous Christian souls, that the project of leaving all to go and toil, and, perhaps, shed their blood, for the salvation of the nations sitting in the shadow of death, flashed simultaneously across the minds of many amongst the listening circle who already designed to enter the ecclesiastical state. They communicated their wish to P. de Rhodes, and, notwithstanding its suddenness, he thought he saw in their spontaneous resolution no mere ebullition of temporary fervour, but the signs of a true vocation; indeed, on leaving them, he told P. Bagot that he had found in these young men dispositions more perfect than he had met with in the various seminaries which he had been visiting throughout Europe.

We can scarcely fail to perceive in the impression produced that day by the conversation of P. de Rhodes the germ of that famous seminary which has given so many glorious martyrs to the Church. Boudon must have viewed it as such, for, writing fifty years later, he mentions how these youths received, through the

powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin, their patroness, the grace to go and preach the Gospel in distant lands. "We may compare," he says, "this group of young men to some small stream which swells into a wide river, when we consider the number of Bishops and Vicars Apostolic who have been chosen from amongst them for the East and for the West, and have been sent to the extremities of the world—to Siam, China, and Canada. Here, in short," he adds, "we may see the origin of the Seminary of Foreign Missions, established at Paris, which spreads abroad the sweet odour of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." When we remember that he had himself been the means of imbuing this little community with those sentiments of unreserved devotion to the interests of God which is so essential a qualification for a missionary vocation, and had been their model and guide for several years, leading them gently on from one grade of perfection to another, we cannot but award to him the credit—a credit which his modesty and humility would never have permitted him to claim either in word or thought—of being himself the actual source whence that great institution took its rise. And here we may well pause a moment to inquire what was the secret of that mighty influence which was exercised by this poor scholar, a mere youth, the junior by several years of many whom he led, devoid of every adventitious earthly aid, living on alms, loving obscurity, seeking neither the praise nor the countenance of any one. How was it that he became the master, the leader, the inspirer, of this band of brilliant young men, rich alike in this world's goods and in the gifts of intellect? Doubtless pious exhortations have their effect on well-disposed hearts, particularly when enforced by edifying

example ; still, we cannot but feel that precept and example afford an insufficient explanation of the wonderful power possessed by him in common with so many saints and saintly men. Personal influence is a mystery even in the natural order. There are unquestionably individuals who exercise on those around them a species of domination which is in a great degree inexplicable. "This influence," says Mgr. de Ségur,* "can be felt rather than defined ; it is an irresistible ascendancy, which subjugates, which attracts, and causes the thought and will of a man to dominate the thoughts and wills of others." In the order of grace this dominion, as he observes, is much more palpable, and it often exhibits itself in individuals whose position or circumstances seem to render its possession quite unaccountable. It has been seen at times in some poor servant or young child, who has been the means of converting whole families. This supernatural gift we may well believe to be a participation of the royalty of Jesus over souls ; "and because Jesus reigns over and rules this child, or this servant, He empowers them to reign in Him, with Him, and for Him over others." The gentle might of holiness, radiating from the centre of the soul in which it abides, works these wonders silently, efficaciously, sweetly, as the sun's rays make the plants grow and the flowers unfold. Often a portion of the charm with which such souls are invested becomes sensible and apparent—as, for instance, in that most winning of saints, Francis de Sales, or in that darling of Mary, St. Stanislas Kostka—while others have had their spiritual beauty more veiled from the cognisance of sense, yet without any

* *La Piété et la Vie Interieure, traité v. ; Nos Grandeurs en Jésus, part ii. chap. iii.*

diminution of its empire. Speaking of the great St. Charles Borromeo, whose gigantic achievements testify to his large participation of this royalty of Jesus and its commanding power over others, his biographer Giussano remarks, "Many a time have I reflected that this saint, being by no means naturally eloquent, but, on the contrary, speaking little, and often even wearing in conversation a serious, severe, and far from engaging air, nevertheless, with a few words uttered in so low a voice that you could scarcely hear them, so touched hearts as to change them entirely, and constrained persons to do all he wished, even in the most important affairs." Giussano justly attributed this gift of persuasion to an indwelling power similar to that which resided in the Apostles and rendered their preaching so marvellously efficacious. "It seemed," he adds, "that he had something, I know not what, which was divine in him; that all his thoughts, actions, words, and designs were stamped with the seal of the Humanity and Divinity of Jesus Christ; and that this Divine Master had imprinted His character upon him. This holy man was always occupied and filled with God, thinking and acting only by His movement and for His glory."* These last words may be truly applied to Boudon also. "God Alone" reigned in him, and was the mainspring of his life, internal and external. This unquestionably was the source of his power over his associates, this was the origin of that mysterious influence which the God-Man, reigning personally by His Spirit in the heart of His servant, gave him to attract and mould and subjugate the hearts of others.

None, as may be imagined, were more moved than

* Quoted by Mgr. de Ségur in the passage already referred to.

Boudon by the vivid picture which Père de Rhodes had drawn ; and, indeed, we have his own authority for saying that he was among the first to be chosen, and therefore, of course, among the first to offer himself, to go on the foreign missions. This he tells us in the letter just alluded to,* written many years after, adding that, having remained in France through being unworthy of so great a grace, he had been the more strictly bound to preach in season and out of season to those Christians who were ignorant of the truths of faith.† The holy youth had not yet attained the age when he could aspire to the priesthood, from which sacred office, indeed, his humility made him shrink ; still, in the burning zeal and overflowing charity of his heart, he hoped that the day would arrive when he might go and evangelise the heathen and, perhaps, shed his blood for Christ. In the meantime he was continually offering fervent prayers, novenas, disciplines, communions, for their conversion, beseeching the Sun of Justice to arise on the nations sitting in darkness. But such was not the career which Providence had marked out for him, albeit he was to tread a path as laborious as that of the missionary, and to suffer a persecution which many would have found far harder to face than martyrdom, and which required for its endurance, if only by reason of its length, a patience and a courage of a very special order.

* The same statement is to be found also in one of his works, *Le Chrétien Inconnu*.

† This passage appears to have been misunderstood by the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, where he represents Boudon as having spoken of himself as the instrument which Divine Providence employed to establish the Seminary of the Foreign Missions. However true this assertion would have been, since the work he accomplished led to that result, it is not borne out by what Boudon says in the letter referred to.

Boudon was at this time only twenty-two years of age, and as he knew that it must be a considerable time before he could put his cherished hope in execution, he endeavoured at least to co-operate in the good work by encouraging those who were likely to be his happy forerunners, and fortifying them against the trials which they would have to encounter from the tears and solicitations of relatives, and, possibly, from the pleadings of their own hearts, when the time for bidding an eternal adieu to friends and country should arrive. To obtain from Heaven the fortitude to perfect their sacrifice, he induced them to keep alive their fervour by every possible means, and redouble their application to those works of mercy of which, we need scarcely say, he was the animating soul. He joined them in prayer and fasting for the same intention, and also in pilgrimages, wherein they courted opprobrium and privations to prepare them for what they would have to endure amongst the savages, by performing these journeys barefoot and begging their bread as they went along. To estimate the worth of these humiliations, we must bear in mind that most of these young men belonged to noble and wealthy families, to which accidental distinctions they joined the personal advantages of a refined and intellectual culture, which commonly brings an increase of sensitiveness, both physical and moral. Boudon himself had need of all the courage with which he strove to inspire his companions when the hour of departure and of an eternal leave-taking on earth had come. The association of several years had knit these young men together in the bonds of a tender friendship; it could not be, therefore, but that Boudon should feel the separation most acutely; but, moreover, he regarded his more

favoured comrades with a holy envy, and longed for the day when he might follow them on the same path of heroic sacrifice. His frail health, however, was to preclude his ever being judged fit to be sent as a missionary to heathen lands. Providence, as already intimated, was preparing for him another path, though one involving no less sacrifice of self, and he was soon to have a first taste of that cup of disappointment and mortification of which during life he was to continue to drink such long and frequent draughts.

It has been mentioned how Boudon's first care, when he gathered his young friends about him, had been to place the association under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and to establish amongst them a special *cultus* of her Holy Heart. The approval of numerous bishops and its adoption by many celebrated communities conferred all the necessary authority on such a practice. The feast had been annually celebrated with much pomp by the Congregation, but about the year 1647 an opposition to this devotion arose, which Boudon, seconded by P. Bagot, in vain endeavoured to counteract and allay. Minds were at that time in a very disturbed state from the prevalence of religious controversy. The word "novelty" was passed from mouth to mouth, and was especially alarming to those who were least competent to judge what really was or was not a novelty; and such a class is always numerous, and often very loquacious and opiniative. The worst of it was that men who well knew that they had good reason to apprehend that their own doctrines, which they were in every way striving to insinuate and disseminate, would have the brand of novelty justly attached to them, were glad to distract the attention of the public by assailing many of those pious practices

which were grounded on the solid teaching of the Church and were most conformable to her spirit, so that, under cover of the opposition and dissension thus excited, they might propagate with more facility their own erroneous maxims.

Our young Congregationalists were too well grounded in the faith and under too good direction to allow themselves to be entrapped by false doctrine, but, unfortunately, a kind of timidity seems to have crept over them; they dreaded lest they should furnish a handle to the accusation of novelty by continuing any practice which might be regarded as singular. Thus it was that the special honour of Mary's Holy and Immaculate Heart came to be looked upon in this light, and the question was mooted whether prudence and a regard to the interests of religion might not impose upon them the necessity of its sacrifice. If prudence spoke thus, it was in Boudon's eyes a merely human prudence, and he exerted himself with all his power to oppose so hurtful a concession. A devotion to the Blessed Virgin, he considered, must be true and sound if conformable to the practice of the Church; and if this devotion were of that character—as it unquestionably was—what more was needed to recommend it? There was no surer way of going to God than through His Blessed Mother, and no invocation was sweeter to her than an appeal to her Holy Heart. But vain were all his endeavours to convince his associates and induce them to cast aside their timid precautions. Accordingly, it was resolved in a general assembly that this festival of the Holy Heart of Mary should be erased from their special calendar, and no longer be reckoned amongst those to be observed by the Congregation.

As soon as this decision was adopted, Boudon felt

convinced that an end had thereby been put to their house, at least as it existed at present; and when, shortly after, he left Paris on a pilgrimage to Beaune to visit the tomb of Sister Margaret of the Holy Sacrament, who had just died in the odour of sanctity, as he walked through the streets of the capital, he suddenly experienced such a feeling of interior anguish that he could scarcely restrain his tears, although he was unable to refer his emotion to any ascertainable cause. When, however, a month or two later, he learned that the Congregation was broken up, the mystery of his unaccountable sorrow of heart was solved. Recalling these particulars many years later, he said that the dissolution of their house took place, he believed, just about the time when the festival of Mary's Holy Heart had been hitherto observed by them, no insignificant fact in his eyes. The immediate reason which led to the separation was this: the greater number of the associates were aspirants to the priesthood, while the remainder were destined for some secular sphere or occupation in which they could serve God and benefit their neighbour. Now, the first class came to think that the companionship of those who were engaged in active pursuits was incompatible with the cultivation of that recollection which was essential to their own higher vocation, and an obstacle to the maintenance of a regularity and discipline similar to that which was practised in the seminaries. They resolved, therefore, no longer to admit any one among their number who did not intend to receive holy orders. Whatever may be thought of their resolution, one thing is plain—it entirely changed the character and, in part, the object of the community such as Boudon had contemplated when he formed it. It virtually transformed it into a

seminary, which it had not been his purpose to found. God, no doubt, had His own overruling designs in permitting this change, for the Congregation in its new form was to become the Seminary of the Foreign Missions,* but it was none the less a severe trial to Boudon. His cherished project must be abandoned, a project which had embraced the design, not only of fostering vocations for the priesthood, but of leavening future members of secular professions with a more interior piety and elevating their standard of Christian holiness. For Boudon reckoned that, although vocations varied in their requirements, and a call to the ecclesiastical or religious life made higher demands on the individual who had received it, nevertheless all Christians were called to live for God alone, and devote their whole energies, according to their several capacities, to His service. To hold it to be sufficient for the laity to content themselves with only "making their salvation," as the French term it, would have been to him a notion as ungenerous as, assuredly, it is pernicious.

It was at Beaune that he received the news of the determination adopted in regard to the society which he had formed and had placed under the patronage of the Immaculate and Holy Heart of Mary. That determination scarcely took him by surprise; for from the moment the society relinquished that patronage he had, as we have just observed, been convinced that it would not long continue to exist in its original state. Never-

* A friend had given the Congregation a house in the Rue du Bac, and here the Seminary of the Foreign Missions soon after took its rise. It was virtually established in 1648, when Vincent de Meurs, a doctor of the College of Navarre and a fervent associate, was placed at its head, but it was not formally erected by letters patent until fifteen years later, in September of 1663.

theless, the radical change that had been resolved upon could not but prove a severe disappointment to him, and it needed all those sentiments of childlike love and resignation which devotion to the Sacred Infancy of Jesus inspires, and of which the lately deceased Sister had furnished so marvellous an example, to soften the blow. Not that he had any difficulty in conforming himself to the will of God—this was easy to one who long before had made the entire sacrifice of any will or desire of his own—but it was not in his power to be insensible to the destruction of a work from which he had looked for great fruits to the honour and glory of God, an expectation which the past had fully warranted. But it was God's will—that sufficed him; and no bitterness mingled with his sorrow or disturbed the calm of his contemplations. So charmed, indeed, was the Carmelite community with his piety, that they bestowed upon him, when leaving, a miraculous picture which had belonged to their venerated sister, and which they had preserved as a holy relic. The dew of Heaven's grace had copiously descended upon him while kneeling at her tomb, already illustrated by miracles, and he returned not only with an increase of love to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, but with a singular devotion to the virgin spouse of the purest of virgins, the great St. Joseph, a devotion which he ever after laboured assiduously to promote.

CHAPTER V.

BOUDON BECOMES AN INMATE OF M. DE MONTMORENCY'S
HOUSE—HIS LIFE AT THIS PERIOD.

BOUDON, on his return to Paris, found, as he had reason to expect, a total change in the exercises of his late associates. As the Missions were now their all-absorbing object, they had discarded all their former employments to devote themselves to complete retirement, and had even retrenched the few customary hours of recreation, which had been designed with a view to spiritual improvement while the mind was enjoying a brief relaxation, as being no longer compatible with the more severe discipline which they had adopted. But what chiefly pained this zealous friend of the poor was the abandonment of all those works of mercy which were so dear to his compassionate heart ; nevertheless, he did not permit himself to make a single observation on what had been done, and it is only from the confidential correspondence of after years that we learn what were his feelings on the occasion ; yet, even then, he gives utterance to no censure. Moreover, he continued on terms of the most perfect friendship with his late companions, and after their removal to the Rue du Bac and reconstitution as the Seminary of the Foreign Missions, he maintained a cordial intimacy with them,

always speaking of their self-sacrificing devotion as beyond all praise. No one, indeed, can for a moment doubt how strong was his sympathy with that object which had now become the exclusive aim of his late associates ; but, if proof were needed, we might refer the reader to numerous passages in his writings.* It was the work which was abandoned for which he felt some natural regrets. Both works might have subsisted had such been God's will ; but it was not God's will, and that was quite enough, not only to silence, but to satisfy Boudon.

He had now entered on his twenty-fourth year, and had some time previously completed successfully his course of theology and philosophy. Everything combined to indicate the ecclesiastical as his future career—his virtues, his piety, his own attractions, and his peculiar qualifications. To these personal reasons might be added one of a secondary character. What other line of life was open to him? He had no resources of his own, and if he did not receive minor orders, he could not be admitted among his former associates. P. Bagot urged every argument to prevail on him to take this step, but he whose counsels had been hitherto implicitly followed now spoke in vain. Boudon's humility led him to regard himself as unworthy of the priesthood, and it was necessary that the voice of God should long speak to him interiorly before he could feel convinced that he was indeed called to assume its tremendous responsibilities. Those words were ever sounding in his ears : "No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called by God, as Aaron was ;"† and, so far from seeing in his present

* See in particular, *Dieu Seul*, Part ii. Prat. 2, where he speaks of the conversion of the heathen.

† Heb. v. 4.

circumstances an additional token that God had chosen him to minister at His altar, his dread lest the least human consideration might influence him, when the promptings of the Holy Spirit ought alone to be regarded, made the difficulties of his position weigh in the opposite scale and help to keep him back. At last, having received one day a very pressing letter from his director on the subject, he took up the *Imitation of Christ*, and, opening it for a reply to his doubts, he lighted on these words : "*Fili, committe Mihi semper causam tuam; Ego bene disponam in tempore suo. Expecta ordinationem Meam, et senties inde profectum.*" * Perfectly satisfied with an answer harmonising so well with his own disposition of mind, he enclosed the passage to P. Bagot, who from that time urged him no further, but left him to the dictates of his interior guide.

Boudon now cast himself anew into the arms of his "good mistress," Divine Providence, with a confidence which nothing could disturb. God would provide. For himself, he formed no resolution save to devote himself unreservedly to His service, to continue the practice of the Evangelical counsels with the same regularity as when his association with kindred souls seemed to sweeten every exercise, and to labour as heretofore for the good of the poor and suffering. True, he had no longer the same pecuniary means at his disposal for their relief as when he enjoyed the co-operation of rich friends, but he gave all he had, that is to say, he distributed the alms occasionally entrusted to him for that purpose, for he possessed literally nothing of

* "Son, always commit thy cause to Me ; I will dispose well of it in due season. Wait for My disposal, and thou shalt find it will be for thy advantage."—B. iii. c. xxxix.

his own ; and, when he had no more to bestow, he still went about in search of misery, to console at least, when he could not aid. Thus, one day, observing a sickly-looking boy of about thirteen or fourteen years of age coming out of the Hôtel Dieu and feebly dragging himself along, he proffered his help to assist him to walk, and heard meanwhile the boy's story. He was a native of Holland, and had come to Paris in the service of a gentleman, like himself a Protestant, but, hearing some one at the *hôtel* where they lodged say that people of their belief could not be saved, he had been alarmed, and had in consequence become a Catholic. Upon this, his master had turned him adrift on the world. The youth fell ill, and had been admitted into the Hôtel Dieu, which he was now leaving homeless and helpless. Boudon took him to his own humble room to share his poverty with him. The boy, who had barely recovered, had soon a relapse, and died in his benefactor's arms, but with such lively sentiments of faith and love that Boudon considered this death as the most precious he had ever witnessed.

He was now himself utterly destitute—reduced, in short, to the same condition in which he had found himself six years before. Yet so it need not have been ; letters remain which prove the interest which his former teachers and companions continued to take in him ; and we have every reason to conclude that he would never have been under the necessity of asking for alms if he had been content to profit by their kindness. Not only, may we believe, would he have been abundantly cared for, but his wants would have been supplied with every delicate consideration for his feelings. But, in choosing poverty for his portion, Boudon had chosen its humiliations also, and this alone made

him prefer to seek relief in the manner most mortifying to pride. Mortifying, it is true, if we look at it in itself; but these lovers of poverty, like the Saint of Assisi, have strange ways and tastes of their own, comprehensible to ordinary Christians; and rebuffs, slights, contempt, far from being felt by our saintly youth as a mortification, seem, if we may allow ourselves so homely a comparison, to have been relished by him as a child relishes a sweetmeat. So, at least, we may conclude, not merely from his election of them, for even a bitter pill may be elected with a view to the benefit expected, but from the delight with which years after he dwelt on the remembrance of them. Nothing, indeed, is more curious than to mark throughout his writings, and particularly in his correspondence, the pleasure which he finds in relating the mortifications which he has received, following herein what cannot be considered a natural bent, for although men often love to talk of their sufferings to those who are willing to listen sympathetically to their tale, there are certain rubs to self-love and instances of personal contempt which, generally speaking, they prefer to brood over in silence, or which, if they confide them to some friendly ear, they speak of with an evident smart of pain.

Boudon, then, once more became a beggar. He took his place again at the church doors amongst the crowd of mendicants who habitually thronged them; an assemblage of men and women, ragged, dirty, and often repulsive in their appearance, and of whom many were as undeserving and vicious as they were poor and wretched. With them he held out his hand for alms, and with them he shared the cold refusal and the hard words which were not seldom all that they received in return. God, however, was about to show how

pleasing to Him was the self-debasement of His servant, and to make it the very means of his elevation. One day, when he had gone to beg at Notre Dame, a gentleman of distinction, whom he addressed, fixed his eyes upon him, and, taking him for one of those vagabonds who swarmed in Paris at that time, a legacy of the troubles of the Fronde, not only reproached him severely, but in terms the violence of which an entire conviction of the worthlessness of the applicant would scarcely have warranted, and which on the ground of mere suspicion were quite unpardonable. For some reason, however, even charitable people are perhaps apt to indulge in more sharpness in the latter than in the former case. Ruffled at having an appeal made to them which they mean to resist, and have persuaded themselves they ought to resist, they are led in their irritation to assume a high and angry tone from the mere desire of self-justification. So much may be alleged in excuse for M. de Montmorency, who certainly was both kind and charitable. Probably he had his misgivings as to the propriety of his behaviour, or he may have been struck by something in Boudon's bearing, for he followed him with his eye, as he retreated behind a pillar, and, unobserved, watched him while he was engaged in prayer. The seraphic fervour depicted in the young man's countenance, as well as its noble expression, which the garb of poverty could not conceal, speedily convinced the gentleman of his mistake. Accordingly he went and accosted him, and inquired, in a manner very different from that which he had lately displayed, who he was, whence he came, and what he sought in Paris. Boudon, without saying a word of his extraction, told him he was a poor scholar from Normandy who had come to Paris to com-

plete his studies, and, having no means of living, was obliged to ask alma. M. de Montmorency now generously offered him his house as his home, where, he told him, he should want for nothing, and should have every facility for prosecuting his studies, which his brother, a young ecclesiastic living with him, would have pleasure in sharing and seconding. Boudon could not but see in this offer, as opportune as it was unexpected, the hand of Divine Providence, and hesitated not to accept it as frankly as it was made. He thus became domiciliated with one of the most illustrious families in France, illustrious no less for its virtues than for its nobility.

The brother to whom M. de Montmorency alluded was the young Abbé de Laval,* known for many years as the Abbé de Montigny, who had been recently made Archdeacon of Evreux, and was about two years Boudon's senior. He had belonged to one of P. Bagot's congregations, and had spent some time at M. de Bernières's hermitage at Caen, a retreat of which we shall soon have occasion to speak. Hence we may conclude that the society of Boudon was very congenial to him, and served not a little to advance him in the ways of grace and in that spirit of humility and detachment to which he was attracted, but which the wealth and distinction enjoyed by his family rendered

* François de Montmorency-Laval, son of Hugues de Montmorency-Laval; born in 1622; made Archdeacon of Evreux in 1648. He relinquished that office in 1653 to go on the foreign missions, when he was consecrated Bishop of Petrus *in partibus* and made Vicar-Apostolic of Canada. In 1659 he embarked for that colony, and became Bishop of Quebec in 1674. In 1685 he resigned his bishopric, but remained at Quebec, where he died in 1708. He was remarkable for his zeal and piety, both as a missionary and as a bishop.

more difficult of practice. Both brothers, indeed, were not slow in discovering the treasure they possessed in their guest, and viewed the obligation as entirely on their side. This disposition was soon shared by the whole family; all regarded Boudon with the profoundest respect, and believed him to be so high in the favour of God that they had nothing more at heart than to seek his counsels and entreat his prayers. We find, for instance, M^{lle}. de Laval, who was in religion, addressing a letter to him some little time after he had taken up his residence with her brother, in which she expresses her confidence in his prayers, and begs him to allow her to have a share in them. She rejoices in the happiness of her brother in having him under his roof; she knows how highly he appreciates this blessing, and she herself thanks God daily for the same. "I hope, Monsieur," she adds, "that you will sometimes write to me, and impart to me the good sentiments with which God inspires you."

In his new sphere Boudon had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with all that was most eminent in piety and virtue in the world of that day. His attraction for the interior life led him to cultivate numerous relations with persons engaged in the religious life. There was scarcely a family in France that did not count one or more members in the cloister, and if, among these, not a few failed in rising to the height of their vocation, while some even who had entered without any true vocation, and from mere secular motives, had carried a worldly spirit into religion, on the other hand there were numbers who adorned it with every virtue; and at no time, perhaps, were more souls to be found within convent walls favoured with singular gifts of grace than in France in the middle of the seventeenth

century. What Boudon sought in these holy retreats were hearts attached to God by the bonds of a pure love, and his correspondence proves that he met with many such. It is quite surprising, indeed, to find what a quantity of letters were addressed to him by religious, from all parts of the country, during the next three or four years; and it is hard to conceive how he, an obscure young layman, holding no office or situation calculated to draw him into notice, could have obtained that species of celebrity of which we find him in possession, and which led so many individuals who were aspiring to perfection to put themselves in communication with him. The difficulty, indeed, receives a partial explanation when we remember that by this time several of his former associates were filling ecclesiastical positions in various dioceses, who, retaining for him the admiration with which he had inspired them, would naturally speak of him to persons of piety and spirituality whom they came to know, and thus may have given occasion to many of these applications. But this supposition would by no means account for all the recorded facts, and in particular for the extraordinary personal veneration entertained for him on subsequent acquaintance, and which was even sometimes produced by a single letter of his. It seemed as if grace issued and, if we may use such a figure, radiated from all he said, did, or wrote, however simple it might be; in all which we may see the proof, if such were wanting, that it is more what a man *is* than what he *says* or *does* which converts and makes saints of others. It is Jesus in him who works this miracle of grace. "I will make of thee a Eucharist," said our Lord to a holy soul whom He often favoured with His visits. "I will chase away thy natural, im-

perfect, and earthly life to replace it by My life, which is all holy, all heavenly, all divine. I desire to be all in thee as I am in the consecrated Host. I desire that the substance of My life should replace the substance of thine; thoughts, desires, affections, wills. I desire that in thee, in thy life, in thy virtues, in thy example, in thy words, in thy works, others may feed on Me. Yes, I desire to make of thee a Holy Eucharist."

Boudon's counsels were sought for religious whose vocations were being tried in different convents of Paris, and for numbers of young men preparing to enter the ecclesiastical state. But it was not novices and beginners alone who had recourse to him, for we find superiors of communities who were already deeply versed in the knowledge and practice of the interior life consulting him with all the humility and deference which they might have evinced to the most experienced director. His letters were sometimes even read at recreation time, that all might share in the edification they produced. As an instance of their effect we may quote the words of the Prioress of the Ursulines at Tours, herself, according to Boudon's testimony, a marvel of sanctity, who had simply seen one of them. "I know not," she says, "whether I am writing to a religious or to a secular, but I know that it is to a person who is seeking God purely and entirely (*à pur et à plein*), and who is His without reserve. How rare a thing it is in our age to find those who speak the language of the saints, as you do in your letter! I feel myself unworthy to address you, but, since God has permitted that I should have this happy opportunity, permit me to communicate with you sometimes, and let us be as one only in Jesus Christ and in His holy Mother." And again, in a subsequent letter,

she tells him that she had long been seeking for a person who desired *God alone*, and rejoices that through His goodness she has now found one.

But among the testimonies of esteem which he received there is none which does Boudon more honour than that which was rendered to him by the Mère Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament, foundress of the Perpetual Adoration. This holy Benedictine nun discerned from the first his high degree of perfection, and was persuaded that God designed great things for his soul; but she seemed to foresee that his path would be one of suffering, and, in her very first letter to him, we find her telling him that God has chosen him to be the victim of His pure love. The relations between Boudon and this holy nun lasted until her death. He had sought her acquaintance in order to profit by the lights she received, and the desire speedily became mutual. He was of great assistance to her in the foundation of her Institution of the Perpetual Adoration. Touched at the sight of the sacrileges and devastation of churches in Lorraine and the north of France during the miserable wars of which they had been the theatre, several pious ladies were desirous to provide the means of founding a religious house which should by continual adoration repair, as far as was possible, the outrages offered to our Lord in the Sacrament of His Love. This house was to be situated in complete retirement, and its inmates were to be entirely occupied with the object of the institution. An essential condition was that the Mère Mechtilde should be the head and superioress of the foundation, but no sooner had she consented to accept this office and taken some steps to obtain a Brief of erection from the Holy See, than she had to encounter all those con-

traditions and that bitter opposition which almost always beset the commencement of great and good undertakings. Some even pious persons, strange to say, appeared more shocked at the project of an Order devoted to expiation than they would have been at the recital of the sacrileges which it was designed to repair. The Solitaries of Port Royal, then at the height of their influence, with the true anti-Catholic and unloving instinct of Jansenism, hotly opposed it as a dangerous innovation, and even the Mère Mechtilde's own friends, notwithstanding the knowledge they must have possessed of her virtues and deep humility, did not scruple to tax her with immoderate ambition and with the reprehensible desire to become the head of an Order. She confided her doubts and perplexities to Boudon, and begged him to consult for her with M. de Bernières, to whom we have already made a passing allusion.

Boudon was at that moment at Rouen, whither he had gone to see his former benefactors, and was lodging at the house of the father of the celebrated Treasurer of Caen. It was in conformity with her desire that he now proceeded to Caen, where he spent three months in the pious retreat which that holy man had constructed for himself. A few words must be devoted to this remarkable person. Jean de Bernières-Louvigny was a native of Caen, and came of noble descent. From his earliest youth he had been drawn to the practice of the Evangelical counsels. The spirit of prayer, the love of retirement from the world and of holy poverty, formed the leading characteristics of his grace. He had also a tender love and compassion for the suffering poor, and used to search them out in their wretched abodes to convey them himself to the

Hospital. When he found one who was too infirm to move, he would take him on his shoulders and carry him through the streets to the Hôtel Dieu, having for this purpose sometimes to traverse the whole town. Such an act on the part of a young man of rank, well known in the place, sufficiently attests his charity and contempt of the world's opinion. He had the advantage of a very holy man for his director, P. Jean Chrysostome, a religious of the Third Order of St. Francis. This connection lasted until the death of Père Chrysostome ; nay, one may almost say after his death, for M. de Bernières never had any other director, continuing to guide himself by the Father's former counsels. He had requested Père Chrysostome, when he lay on his deathbed, to point out another to succeed him in his office, but he replied without hesitation that he could not name any who would be suitable. The love of this religious for abjection had led him to make a vow to procure for himself as much contempt as the order of God would permit, and, for this end, he fervently sought the intercession of St. Joseph, promising him to fast a hundred days in his honour, if he would obtain for him to be despised and rebuffed by all men. De Bernières was a faithful follower and disciple of this great son of St. Francis, though he himself was never called to the religious life. His director fortified and encouraged in him that love of self-humiliation which might be considered the ruling passion of his own soul. He had established a spiritual society styled the Confraternity of Holy Abjection. As Boudon himself remarks, who had also the same attraction, it may be readily believed that this society was not very numerous ; nevertheless, those who thus associated themselves in holy union with Jesus abject and de-

spised made up in Christian generosity for their lack of numbers. De Bernières was foremost amongst the brethren in zeal, and, since poverty is of its nature an abject state, that virtue was always dear beyond expression to him, and, so far as he was able, he carried it out in his own person. None of his spiritual associates were allowed to address him as anything but Brother John. He ate off the commonest earthenware, such as the Capuchins use, his food being the coarse bread of the country, which in Normandy, Boudon tells us, they styled brown bread, but which anywhere else would have been called black.

So greatly was he enamoured of that state which the God-Man elected for Himself, that his consuming desire was to become actually poor, to divest himself of his goods and live on alms. As men who value their property—and few there are who do not set some store by it—regard with apprehension any probable, nay, any possible reverse of fortune which might reduce them to indigence, with De Bernières such a stroke of Providence might be said to be one of his day-dreams. He would have esteemed it a very Paradise to have to beg his bread from door to door. His director, indeed, was of opinion that actual poverty was the centre to which his grace was drawing him, and that he would never be easy until he had reached this point of repose. Supported by this opinion, M. de Bernières cast about him for the means of realising his wish, but after his director's death he found no one either to encourage or to aid him in his project. All thought that he made such excellent use of his money, that he had far better keep it; and his sister-in law, although it was her own children who would profit by the renunciation, opposed the act with a generous pertinacity. For some family

reason De Bernières felt himself bound in justice to make over his possessions to his own relatives ; otherwise, he used sometimes to declare that he should be compelled, if his sister-in-law continued to stand in the way of his making himself poor, to sell them and give away the purchase-money to whoever would take it. It became necessary, at last, to content him, and allow him to make over all his property to his relatives. Henceforth he was dependent on others for his daily bread, but his family took care that he should always be abundantly supplied with means. He could not, therefore, realise his "Paradise," but he had, at least, the consolation for his remaining years of knowing that he possessed nothing of his own. His disengagement from earthly things had drawn down an abundance of graces upon him. God hastens to fill the heart which has emptied itself of creatures. So pure was his conscience that, having gone on pilgrimage to Notre Dame de la Délivrance in company with several other holy persons, and having felt a sensible joy from the pious discourses which had passed between them on the way, he feared that nature might have had a part in this satisfaction. Such was the matter which he brought back from his expedition for confession, as he candidly told Boudon. For both De Bernières and Boudon, in common with others raised to an eminent degree of union with God, intimately felt that in the Christian all must be supernatural and divine, because from the moment that he begins to act purely as man he substitutes his own operation for that of Jesus Christ ; a thing which these two holy souls regarded with horror, even where the act was simply indifferent and without a shadow of sin in it.

M. de Bernières, in order that he might be better

able to carry out more freely the life of continual prayer to which he was called, had, by the advice of his director, built himself a small dwelling, close to the convent gate of the Ursulines, of whom his sister, Jourdain de Bernières, was superioress. The plan had been drawn by P. Chrysostome, who assured his penitent that it would serve, not him alone, but many devout souls, as a place of retreat. This prediction was soon verified, for a few chosen friends came and shut themselves up with M. de Bernières in the Hermitage, as it was called, although it was located in the midst of a city. To its inmates, however, it was another Thebaid, for they and their superior—and such they regarded M. de Bernières to be—passed here a life of absolute retirement, and almost uninterrupted silence, in contemplation of eternal truths. Even at recreation time, as Boudon testifies, who spent two or three months with them, no subject was spoken of save prayer. It was never otherwise; days, months, and years rolled on, and it was always the same theme which occupied these recluses; a theme which seemed ever new to them, and of which they never wearied, because, as Boudon observes, the subject on which they dwelt tended to God alone, who is the sole centre of our true rest. Rising early, they gave the whole day to God, leaving the house only for works of charity or acts of devotion. M. de Bernières had also to acquit himself of the functions of his office as Treasurer, but those who knew him aver that he never left his habitual state of union. We have, indeed, Boudon's valuable testimony that, layman as he was, and engaged in a secular charge, he must be regarded as one of the greatest contemplatives of the age.

Besides the permanent inmates, we find the names

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of several ecclesiastics as well as pious seculars, amongst which occurs that of the Baron de Renty, as having made temporary visits to the Hermitage. De Bernières was also consulted by numbers of persons on matters of conscience and the spiritual life, and that not by laymen only, but by priests and religious, including the superiors of communities; even the heads of Orders soliciting his advice and acting upon it with much profit. His lights in prayer were marvellous, and his words had that living efficacy which attends those of saints. His death was as exceptional as his life had been. No previous illness announced its approach. He was at prayer late one evening, when his servant came to apprise him of the hour, a necessary precaution, as otherwise he would not have remembered to retire to rest. M. de Bernières begged him mildly to allow him a few more minutes. When the servant returned some time later, he found his master still kneeling upright, but quite dead. His holy soul, all absorbed in God, had passed away without a struggle to the enjoyment of the eternal vision. It was a death which recalls to the mind that of the great St. Benedict. If it be true, as a tradition in the Louvigny family attested, that their saintly relative entertained a great dread of that awful passage, and had prayed that his departure might be sudden, we must regard it as a singular favour vouchsafed to him.

We can well imagine that a man like Boudon would thoroughly sympathise with those sentiments of self-abnegation and love of poverty with which his friend was animated, and encourage him to persevere in carrying them out according to his desire, as well as promote all the works of mercy and of missionary enterprise which De Bernières was so instrumental in aiding or

founding. The missions in China and in Canada were specially indebted to him, and the Hermitage became the nursery of many a high vocation. The friendship of De Bernières for Boudon never wavered, and, so far from conceiving any mistrust of him when, in after years, calumny began to assail the saintly priest, he said that the great archdeacon should always find a home in his house, and that he should deem it a happiness to be calumniated and persecuted in his company; a promise to which he would, no doubt, have been faithful had he lived long enough to see his friend become the victim of universal obloquy and deserted by wellnigh all who knew him. De Bernières has left in his works a memorial of his deep experimental knowledge of the interior ways and of the secret dealings of grace with chosen souls. These writings, it must be observed, were not printed until after his death, and had never been intended by him for publication. They were the fruit of simple obedience to his director, who bade him record the lights he received in prayer, and were dictated to a priest who lived with him, as his own eyesight was much impaired. These are the terms in which Boudon speaks of the *Chrétien Intérieur*, apparently the only work of De Bernières which had as yet been given to the world: *—"The divine unction which you taste in it sufficiently proves from what spirit these pure lights proceeded; this is why the book of the *Chrétien Intérieur* has been everywhere read in communities of men and of women;

* Several of his works have been published, including *Le Chrétien Intérieur : Œuvres Spirituelles, Pensées de M. de Bernières-Louvoigny, ou Sentiments du Chrétien Intérieur sur les principaux Mystères de la Foi pour les grandes Fêtes de l'année*. He left also many other works in manuscript, and amongst them his Life written by himself.

that it has been relished both by the learned and the illiterate ; that it has been seen in the hands of persons in all classes, including those of the highest rank ; that from France it passed into other kingdoms, and has been translated into several languages ; that it has appeared at Rome, where it met with a most remarkable reception ; that Cardinals and Bishops have taken it for their spiritual reading ; and that, in fine, it has been everywhere a book of benediction." Nevertheless both the *Chrétien Intérieur* and the *Ceuvres Spirituelles* by the same author were subsequently placed on the Index ; but it must be observed that this prohibition need have imported no censure on the writer or on his intentions, but may have regarded only inaccuracy or dangerous exaggeration in the expressions he employed. Written or, rather, dictated, as his works were, before the question of Quietism had made its appearance, and without any view to publication, such faults may easily have occurred ;* but to this subject we have referred in the Advertisement to this volume, where we speak of Boudon's own writings, in which he was able to correct whatever he thought might possibly be misunderstood or be liable to censure.

* Collet is of opinion that it was the Italian translation which alone was at fault. Boudon, however, considering the high sanction and approval which De Bernières's works had for years enjoyed at Rome, believed that the prohibition to read these and other publications was solely on account of the abuse which heretics were making of them. Indeed, he reminds his friend, M. Bosguérard, that in the previous century even the indiscriminate reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue had been forbidden for a like reason. Still the fact remains that M. de Bernières's two works have been left on the Index ; and consequently all expressions which might be judged erroneous or exaggerated have been suppressed or modified in modern editions. Boudon's respect for the decrees of the Sacred Congregation cannot be questioned ; his remarks refer only to their actual bearing on the meaning and intentions of the censured writers.

The memory of M. de Bernières and his pious companions, with whom, as has been observed, Boudon passed three months, was never effaced from his mind. Doubtless the time he spent there seemed short to him, but to his friends at Paris it appeared very long. The object of his visit was, indeed, now accomplished, and the Mère Mechtilde, having been fully confirmed by De Bernières's advice and approval in the resolution of prosecuting her design in spite of opposition, herself begged him to return in order to comfort the family of his patrons and especially the Abbé de Montigny's mother, who was suffering severely from some family affliction. He was at that time to be also the minister of consolation to another lady of high rank, the Duchesse de Bouillon, who was plunged in extreme grief by the loss of her husband.* She was in the habit of visiting the Mère Mechtilde to find in her pious conversation strength to bear her bereavement. Here she met Boudon, who compassionated her sorrow, which arrived at an excess more often witnessed in those who have been hitherto sheltered from every blast of adversity, and who have been brought up in the lap of luxury, than in such as have trodden life's rougher paths. He prayed with her and for her, and she gratefully appreciated the spiritual service he rendered her. She continued his firm friend during the few remaining years of her life, but she never really recovered from the effects of the blow she had received, the sorrow she experienced undermining her health. This lady made a vow that she would have twenty-five thousand Masses said for the souls in Purgatory, if she could learn the state of her departed

* Frederic-Maurice de la Tour d'Auvergne, Duc de Bouillon, elder brother of the great Turenne. He received the Comté of Evreux in exchange for the principality of Sedan.

husband's soul. Several holy persons, remarkable for their special graces, were besought to pray earnestly for this revelation. It does not appear that it was God's will to vouchsafe the knowledge, for two of these petitioners reported that the soul of the Duc de Bouillon was in Heaven, and two others that he was in Purgatory. It is Boudon himself who relates this circumstance as a proof of the caution we must use in all such cases,* the devil having always his object in deceiving us, and being permitted at times to transform himself into an angel of light.

CHAPTER VI.

BOUDON IS APPOINTED ARCHDEACON OF EVREUX, AND RECEIVES ORDINATION.

THE five or six years which Boudon spent in the family of M. de Montmorency were perhaps the happiest, as they were also the most peaceful, of his life. Yet these words must be used with a certain reservation, for it is impossible to peruse either the writings or the letters of this holy man without perceiving that the more his "dear and loving mistress, Divine Providence," laid upon him, the happier in a certain sense he was; that is to say, in the centre of the soul, where so many never even enter, but where he habitually dwelt, for ever uttering those words, God Alone, adoring "the Three Divine Persons in the union of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, his good Saviour and the Saviour of all men," and giving glory and

* *Lettre cclxxviii. Œuvres Complètes, t. iii. p. 1207.*

thanks without ceasing for every fresh stroke of adversity which befell him. Descending, however, to a lower plane, and using the word happiness in the more ordinary acceptation of the term—that is, as implying the satisfaction of the whole man collectively, including all his faculties and all his mental and spiritual powers, with their appropriate tastes and desires—there is every reason to regard this period as the bright season of his earthly pilgrimage. Living in a congenial atmosphere of piety, charged as yet with no responsibility save the care of his own soul, enjoying ample liberty and leisure, which he knew how to employ so well, and associated in holy friendship with many souls high in God's favour and gifted with singular graces, he seemed to have all which, spiritually or temporally, he could desire. But he did not rest in their enjoyment. If these years wore the aspect of a pause in his life, to him they were years of preparation and expectancy. He had never abandoned his hope of one day being sent to evangelise the heathen, and, while he kept up intimate relations with former associates, now dispersed in various places and engaged in different states of life, who continued to write to him from all parts of France, he frequently visited the Seminary of the Foreign Missions, and loved to take his friends with him. It was thus that the Abbé de Laval came to conceive such a high esteem for the work, that he resolved to devote his life to it. His birth and position would have facilitated his elevation to the highest ecclesiastical dignities in his own country, which he could have enjoyed with honour and personal ease, but he preferred promotion where dangers and hardships were its accompaniments.

The Jesuits had begun to preach to the savages of Canada, and the establishment of the French in that

region was assuming a greater solidity. The Government had accordingly determined that a bishop should be sent out to head the priests who were about to proceed to the Canadian missions. The Abbé de Laval no sooner heard of the project than he offered himself to fill the post, and accordingly he was appointed Vicar-Apostolic of New France by the Holy See in 1659. His sole solicitude, when about thus to bid farewell to his native land, was to be able to resign his archdeaconry of Evreux into the hands of a worthy successor. He fixed his eyes on Boudon, but a great difficulty stood in the way. How persuade one who, through humility, still shrank from the priesthood, to begin his ecclesiastical career by the acceptance of a high and important office? The Abbé de Laval long besieged his friend with fruitless entreaties; at last he had recourse to Père Bagot, who did not confine himself to exhortations, but, convinced that God was clearly manifesting His will and calling Boudon to this charge, spoke to him with all the authority which he possessed over his soul, and set before him in the strongest light the obedience he owed to the designs of Divine Providence, which were so unmistakably apparent. Boudon at length yielded. One of the motives which had always inspired him with a repugnance for benefices and ecclesiastical dignities was his love of poverty, and another, equally powerfully with him, was his dominant attraction to go and labour for God in any and every place to which His will should lead him, without fixing himself in any definite locality or confining himself to any exclusive sphere of action. Never, indeed, could he have been induced to accept the archdeaconry of Evreux if he had not been aware that this office did not impose the necessity of resi-

dence—by which we must understand permanent residence—and that the revenues, so far from supplying the individual holding it with an adequate maintenance, were not even large enough to meet the expenses of the visitations and the other charges with which it was burdened. As Archdeacon of Evreux, Boudon would, therefore, be poorer than ever, and if he were debarred from the happiness of going to evangelise the heathen, he would at least be at liberty to preach from time to time in any part of France.

Before his ordination, however, it was needful for him to take his degree, for, although he had gone through the whole course of preparatory study at the University of Paris, he had, on account of his poverty, abstained from graduating. To supply this deficiency he now repaired to the University of Bourges, where he received his doctor's cap on the 7th of October 1653. The Abbé de Laval obtained from Rome the necessary dispensations for shortening the intervals in the reception of the different orders. He was tonsured by the Pope's Nuncio on the 4th of November in the Church of the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin at the Jesuit Noviciate. The ecclesiastical habit which Boudon then assumed, he assumed, not for life only, but for every day of his life, never on any occasion appearing in any other dress, contrary to the practice of so many of the clergy of that time, who affected a worldly costume when not engaged in any religious function.* The livery which he then

* In estimating this custom, which Boudon thus practically condemned in his own person, it must be borne in mind that there was neither reason nor excuse at that time for the clergy of France abstaining from marking their profession by their dress. It is needless to say that there are seasons, as well as places, in which prudence amply justifies such a course.

put on was, in fact, his glory. These are his own words when alluding to the day on which he was admitted to the first degree of the clerical state :—" This day, on which is celebrated the feast of St. Charles Borromeo, has for me become the feast of God alone ;" and he proceeds to allude to the meaning of the word clergy (*cleros*) as being synonymous with *lot*; " for then," he adds, " I took God for my lot and my portion ; it was then I declared, in face of Holy Church, in the hands of the Nuncio of His Holiness, and in the house of the Queen of Saints, that the Lord is the portion of my inheritance : *Dominus pars hereditatis meae* (Ps. xv. 5). Now this is a portion which ought to be wholly sufficient, and, to him who has taken it, nothing remains to be taken or hoped for. From that moment I could possess nothing but God alone."

On the 28th of February, 1654, the archdeaconry of Evreux was conferred on Boudon by Gilles Boutault, its Bishop ; he was then just thirty years of age, the same at which our Divine Lord began His public ministry. He repaired to Evreux, in the month of June following, to be installed in his high office, but, faithful to those principles of humility from which he never departed, he declined the Bishop's invitation to lodge in the episcopal palace, as well as several similar offers which he received from different members of the clergy, and took up his quarters at one of the poorest inns in the place. The next morning, when preparing to pay his visits to the members of the Chapter, he proceeded to put on his long cloak, a present, Collet tells us, of the Abbé de Laval, who was, no doubt, desirous that his friend should make a creditable appearance. This cloak had been deposited upon a chair during the night ready for use, but, when Boudon was

about to put it on, he found it full of holes, gnawed, as it would seem, by the rats. If the devil thought that Boudon would be vexed at this misadventure he was deceived, as he often is, especially by saints. Boudon had none of that self-love upon which the enemy of souls can inflict injuries such as the rats had made in the cloak. One can almost fancy the smile of half-amusement, half-gratification, which passed over the holy man's face, as he held up his cloak and perceived the state it was in. Having caused the holes to be hastily cobbled up, he put it on cheerfully and set off to pay his visits to the Canons. It was impossible but that they should observe the curious toilet of their new archdeacon, but, whatever may have been their secret comments, Boudon, who knew very well what they were thinking about, was more disposed to laugh than to blush, and to the last years of his life used to relate this little incident for the diversion of his friends.*

He did not remain long at Evreux, for he was in haste to enter on his preparation for ordination, and set off for Rouen to select from amongst the communities with which he was acquainted in that city the one best suited for his purpose, and where he could

* Collet's account differs from the above. He makes Boudon visit Evreux on two occasions. The first visit, he says, was in company with his friend the late archdeacon; the second corresponds with that mentioned in the text, except that he attributes Boudon's mean lodging to the contempt with which he was received, and which, he declares, went so far as to close the better inns against him. He even imputes to malice the damage done to his cloak, which seems hardly probable. The author of the *Vie Nouvelle* had access to unpublished manuscripts and letters of Boudon addressed to M. Bosguérard, which leave no doubt, he assures us, as to the actual facts. We have, therefore, adhered to his statement.

drink deepest of the spirit of self-renunciation and sacrifice. No one, perhaps, was ever to stand in need of a greater stock of these indispensable qualifications for the priesthood. From Rouen he addressed a letter of admirable humility to the Curés of Evreux in excuse for not having been able to call upon them before his departure. A passage or two may serve as a specimen of the sentiments with which he had taken possession of his benefice. "It is the lowest of creatures," he says, "who addresses this poor letter to you, to entreat you in your charity to remember his misery before the Majesty of the All-good God. I have thought that the Adorable Crucified would be glorified, if, having been called by an excess of His love to the archdeaconry of Evreux, we should be heedful to recommend ourselves to your Holy Sacrifices.* . . . It is not the poor sinner whom I commend to your recollection; I see before God that I deserve to be effaced from the minds of all creatures; it is the sole interest of the All-good God which I beseech you to regard in your prayers. It is the affairs only of Jesus Christ our God which I commend to your care. All my confidence is in the Divine power, and what consoles me in my misery is that I hope that my Lord Jesus Christ will shine forth with the more splendour in so abject a creature as I am." After expressing a humble hope that his own great infidelities may not mar the work of God, that the Adorable God-Man may give him a spirit of death to all creatures, and that he may wholly die to himself, he characteristically adds, "All will go well, if the poor archdeacon be well destroyed, be well annihilated by the Spirit of God." (He was indeed

* Boudon commonly speaks of himself in the plural number, particularly when he has occasion to specify anything he has done.

to have his desire, and to be satiated with contempt and opprobrium.) “It is with this view that I have offered the archdeaconry of Evreux to the most holy Mother of God, knowing that, if once she has it in her hands, it will be wholly given up to her dear Son.” The letter is couched throughout in the same style, which is unmistakably that of Boudon. He signs himself the “slave of the Blessed Virgin and most unworthy archdeacon of Evreux.”* He had, in fact, on the previous 5th of May, in presence of some of his most intimate friends, made the solemn offering to Mary to which he here alludes, but which is too long for insertion.† It breathes in every line the most fervent devotion and gratitude to our Lady. He acknowledges that all he has he holds from the charitable goodness of her holy Heart: “I say it in your presence, loving Intelligences of Paradise”—the angels are always united in Boudon’s mind with Mary—“if I am not damned I owe it to your divine Queen and mine.” He goes on to beseech the Immaculate Virgin Mother that, even as it has been the will of God that he should have depended so absolutely upon her heavenly charity, so might she never, for the honour and glory of that Divine will, suffer the most deplorable and unfaithful of hearts to do anything apart from that dependence. He continues in the same fervent strain to dedicate himself to the glory and love of Jesus, having no ambition save to become His victim, but all through this glowing dedication Mother and Son are so intimately united, the two loves are so commingled, that it is impossible to disjoin them, for, if all is for

* Boudon had already written his work, *L’Esclavage de la Mère de Dieu*.

† See *Œuvres Complètes*, tom. iii. p. 789.

Jesus and, in Him, for the Super-Adorable and Ever-Blessed Trinity, all is through the Blessed Mother of God; and so he gives himself without reserve, for time and eternity, to the "most holy Heart of the never sufficiently loved Mary," that she may do with him what she pleases. After that follows his offering of the archdeaconry of Evreux to his sweet Mother. He accepts it only to give it to her, and make himself the instrument of her behests. Next, he turns to the holy angels, "the illustrious Princes of the Empyrean," to engage them to present the archdeaconry to the amiable Heart of Mary, as being more acceptable through their angelic hands.

With the same object he addresses the glorious St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, the disciple of pure love, and all his other holy patrons and patronesses, favourites of the Heart of Mary, together with all the other saints, begging them to join in offering this benefice to their incomparable Mistress. The concluding sentence may serve as a specimen of the exuberant love which clothed itself, or, rather, poured itself forth, in that peculiar diction which may be called Boudon's style, if that term can be applied to one who never sought to cultivate any literary graces, but which all who are acquainted with his works will at once recognise as his. We give it verbatim: "O my thoughts, my designs, my words, my affections, my actions, O my heart, my soul, go, run, fly, plunge, lose yourselves, in the pure love of the incomparable Hearts of Jesus and Mary, for the honour and glory of the Super-Adorable Trinity, which alone must be all in all. O God alone, God alone, God alone, always God alone for ever, for the great everlasting! God alone for all things, in all things, in Mary, in the angels and the saints, in

all creatures, but God most absolutely alone, and naught beside. This 5th of May, the vigil of the feast of the sufferings of the Beloved Disciple, St. John the Evangelist, before the Latin gate, my most faithful friend,—this Tuesday of the year 1654, a day dedicated to the remembrance of the holy angels, my most honoured masters,—Henri-Marie Boudon, the slave of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, of the angels and of the saints, the very unworthy archdeacon of Evreux.” He renewed his offering twenty years later, on the feast of the Annunciation,* and again, in the year 1680, on the feast of the Assumption. In this last the names of many of the saints of the diocese of Evreux, to whom he was most devout, as well as the tutelary angels of all its churches, are added to those of his other great patrons.

These effusions of Boudon’s piety—and almost all his works are full of similar passages—must not be

* The feast of the Annunciation was the principal feast of the Confraternity of the Slavery of the Blessed Virgin. This confraternity had been authorised and enriched with many indulgences by several Popes. Urban VIII., having been consulted with regard to the exterior badges worn by the associates in the form of little chains, approved their piety and fervour, and added many indulgences to those already accorded to the Captives of the Blessed Virgin, as he styles them in the Bull promulgated by him. He also permitted the erection of confraternities practising this devotion. It is true that the wearing of these chains was subsequently forbidden by certain decrees of the Sacred Congregation of the Index, but this was on account of the abuse which worldly persons had made of them, and is not to be understood as implying any condemnation of the devotion itself. “How, indeed,” says Collet, very justly, in his *Dissertation Historique et Apologetique sur les Ouvrages de Boudon*, “could the Roman Pontiffs have condemned a devotion which they had authorised by their diplomas and indulgences?” Besides, there would seem to be nothing in these decrees formally interdicting the use of these little chains to *private persons*. See note to the Ven. Grignon de Montfort’s *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, translated by Father Faber, p. 164.

critically regarded but spiritually relished. If any one does not thus relish them, he may as well close the book which contains them, for mere literary taste will never appreciate or approve them. Indeed, by such a standard, he will seem to be chargeable with frequent outbursts of the same sentiments and a repetition of the same truths. But these multiplied ejaculations are the ever-fresh outpourings of a love too passionate to be confined within set bounds, and the repetitions are but manifestations of that inner, intimate, and experimental certainty which, unable to find adequate expression in language, seeks to make up for this deficiency by iteration.

Boudon did not escape censure on this occasion, and the striking exhibition of love and reverence which he had made to the Blessed Virgin provoked very general sarcasm. He was accused of affectation, and of aiming at singularity. "I have already," he writes to a friend, "been ridiculed for paying honour to her. They have even had my dedication printed to expose my absurdity. Learned men have passed their jokes amongst each other; in short, I am reckoned a fool: *nos stulti propter Mariam.*" He was more than willing to be esteemed such for her sake. He was now quite engrossed with the thought of the tremendous and awful act before him. He could not reflect upon it without a shudder of holy fear, and it was in these sentiments that he repaired to the Chartreuse of Gaillon, there to spend the time of his retreat. He remained at the Chartreuse from the 11th of August to the close of December, with the single interruption of going to receive minor orders, which were conferred on him successively by Mgr. Gilles Boutault during the Ember Days, and then repaired to Evreux for his

ordination to the priesthood, which took place on the 1st of January 1655. If any one desires to have an insight into the dispositions which Boudon deemed necessary for the reception of Holy Orders, and into his exalted views respecting the priesthood, he has only to refer to the pages of his work, *On the Holiness of the Ecclesiastical State*. That work was written long afterwards, but it embodies the sentiments he entertained when called to receive the sacerdotal unction. It was these very sentiments which had long held him back from that august dignity on which, nevertheless, his eyes had been aspiringly fixed. These sentiments never faded, or became dulled by habit, and, even near the close of his life, we find him exclaiming, "I marvel that the earth does not open to engulf me, when I think of the divine, the terrible grandeur of my state, and how far removed I am from the sanctity which it requires." *

On leaving the Chartreuse of Gaillon, in order to be ordained priest, Boudon accepted the hospitality of the Duchesse de Bouillon, which she had earnestly pressed upon him. He was, indeed, to become her constant and honoured guest, whenever he was resident at Evreux, until her death, which occurred two years later. It would appear that no small amount of curiosity was excited in the city with regard to the new archdeacon, to which the pious practices he had observed on taking possession of his office had not a little contributed. His piety was certainly singular; it could not, however, be questioned; it must be genuine in one who was so far from desiring to magnify himself as to be even remarkable for his neglect of his own personal appearance. The Curés of Evreux had

* *Chrétien Inconnu*, l. ii. c. vi.

replied in terms of respect and admiration to the letter which Boudon had addressed to them from Rouen. They could not well do otherwise, neither need we do them the injustice of supposing that they spoke insincerely; at the same time we can hardly be wrong in suspecting that his extraordinary tone of humility puzzled them not a little. Sainly virtue soars into heights and dives into depths where the eye of the ordinary Christian often fails to follow it. When such a one *reads* about virtue of this order, he feels differently; his attitude of mind is different. He says to himself, "This is a saint;" and there, it is to be feared, the matter often ends. Anyhow, the saint is not censured, and does not even excite surprise. But with the living man, whom the Spirit of God is leading along the hidden ways of perfection, it is quite otherwise. He is measured by a totally different standard, and is often misunderstood, or, at least, very imperfectly understood, even by good men. Such appears to have been the case with Boudon. He had introduced himself to the clergy of Evreux as "the most abject of men:" what did he mean by this unwonted self-abasement? Whence arose his apologetic view of his own qualifications? Had it any ground? There surely must be some reason to account for this extraordinary humility of his, some consciousness of inferiority. What of his learning? He had taken his degree at Bourges; he had, in fact, studied at the University of Paris,—but the Curés of Evreux probably knew nothing of this, and Boudon himself was the last person likely to inform them. A Doctor of Bourges was a title which possibly did not argue any large stock of erudition, and Boudon's extreme simplicity of manners and unpretentious bearing

served but to confirm them in these gratuitous suspicions.

That such suspicions existed, the sequel proves. A little conspiracy was planned with the view, if not precisely of detecting the new archdeacon's theological deficiencies, at least of testing his knowledge very severely. He was asked to dinner by one of the Curés of the town, to which almost all the members of the Chapter were likewise invited, and it was agreed that some very difficult and embarrassing subjects should be, as it were casually, brought forward and discussed. It must be owned that this proceeding was far from commendable, wanting, as it was, both in charity to a brother and in proper respect to one who had been set over them by their bishop. With the view of perplexing a single individual the works of the living and the dead were laid under contribution, and every member of the party stood prepared with one or more hard questions wherewith to ply him. They did not know the man they had to deal with. Boudon was not only deeply versed in theology, both dogmatic and mystical, as well as in the writings of the Fathers and the Lives of the Saints, but he was thoroughly acquainted with ecclesiastical history, canon law, the discipline of the Church, ancient and modern, as well as with all that related to the government of a diocese. To hear him talk on any one of these subjects, you might have imagined that he had given his exclusive attention to that branch of knowledge. Moreover, he was gifted with a marvellous memory; a memory so retentive and sure that he had the perfect use and command of all that had at any time been stored up within it. Added to this, he had a quick eye to seize the real point of a question. He apprehended truth with a

glance, and knew how to state and uphold it with irresistible cogency. No one had ever the better of Boudon in argument. Such was the intellectual furniture of the "most abject of men." The dinner passed off quietly, after which the conversation, as is wont, became more general and animated. It was now that the confederates began to open their batteries. No one, however learned, can be expected to know everything, or to have forgotten nothing which once he knew; if Boudon had therefore failed in some one particular or other, it could hardly have been set down to his discredit; but, so far from being even the least at fault, he answered without hesitation, with the utmost precision and most perfect calmness, every question put to him; in short, his assailants found him armed at all points, and it was plain that, had it so pleased him, he could have turned the tables on them and placed them in a position which might have proved humiliating to their self-love. But such a proceeding would have been far from Boudon's thoughts, had he even suspected the trap laid for him. The author of the *Vie Nouvelle* says he did not suspect it, and we suppose that he speaks with authority, but otherwise it would have been far from improbable that he should, at least, have perceived that a combination existed to test his powers, and that all this learned talk was scarcely accidental. For Boudon, though harmless as a dove, was wise as a serpent, and proofs are not wanting in his letters that he often saw through the devices of those who were actuated by ill-will towards him. Be this as it may, two things are certain: one, that, if he had suspected that the topics of conversation were introduced with a purpose, he would have attributed the least possible amount of malice to the intention;

the other, that no knowledge of malice entertained against him could at any time have diminished his charity ; nay, a special love for his enemies, whom he numbered among his chief benefactors, was one of his prominent excellences.

The clergy of Evreux were as yet, however, by no means hostile to him, though he seems in the first instance to have been somewhat of a riddle to them, and a temptation certainly existed to undervalue one who set so little value on himself. They were soon to discover that this value was no criterion of his real worth. The result of the dinner-party, indeed, was alone sufficient to open their eyes, but they had further and conclusive evidence as soon as he ascended the pulpit. He appeared there, M. Bosguérard tells us, with the spirit and power of Elias. He was now speaking in God's name, not in his own, and was quite another man. It was the "Thus saith the Lord" that now came with power and authority from his lips, and his holy vehemence truly recalled that of the ancient prophets, as we figure them to our minds delivering God's message to a sinful people. His clear and beautiful voice reached to the remotest corners of the church, and, what was more, penetrated the hearts of his listeners, exciting successively every sentiment to which it appealed. Large as was the church of St. Pierre, it was far too small to contain the numbers who flocked to hear him ; the very street in front of the sacred edifice was filled with an eager crowd pressing to the door in the hopes of gaining entrance, or, at least, of catching some of the words which issued like winged darts from the mouth of the wonderful preacher. Yet his sermons owed nothing to the variety of their subjects, for from January to Easter he preached on one

single text of Scripture: "*Multa flagella peccatoris*—Many are the scourges of the sinner."* Neither did they owe anything to studied effect. Boudon abhorred rhetoric and display, flowery eloquence and every other oratorical device. But when did rhetoric or oratory move the heart of any one to open itself to God's grace? Unction, the unction in the preacher's own bosom, coming forth with his words and carrying his own deep convictions in what may be called a living form to the ears of his auditors, if so be they have ears to hear—this is what moves, this is what opens the heart. And unless what comes forth from the preacher's lips possesses this living energy, no external adornments, no striking figures of speech, no affected pathos, however well intended and however skilfully employed, will bring forth fruits of grace. Boudon was himself full of the matter on which he preached. He was no declaimer at second hand, all came pure from the source, and this it was which imparted the freshness of originality and an endless variety to whatever subject he handled. Hence his terrible text would not have been exhausted had he preached on it six months instead of three. The words of Eliu might in truth have been applied to him: "I am full of matter to speak of, and the spirit of my bowels straiteneth me. Behold, my belly is as new wine, which wanteth vent, which bursteth the new vessels." †

We have the testimony of one who was present, to the extraordinary compunction produced by Boudon's preaching. This was M. Bosguérard, ‡ who has just been mentioned. He was then quite a youth, engaged

* Ps. xxxi. 10.

† Job xxxii. 18, 19.

‡ Afterwards Doctor in Theology, and Curé of St. Nicolas at Rouen. He was a native of Evreux.

in his studies, but henceforth he attached himself to Boudon, and remained under his direction as long as he lived. He says that, when preaching in the church of St. Pierre on Palm Sunday, he so completely melted the hearts of his hearers, even the most impenitent, that nothing was to be seen on all sides but torrents of tears, some being so overcome with excess of sorrow as to seem ready to render up their souls on the spot. Never, he said, had anything like it been seen. "As for myself," he adds, "who assisted regularly at his sermons, I was so forcibly impressed that I made a sincere resolution never again deliberately to commit sin, but to give myself unreservedly to God and desire to love in good earnest Jesus Christ my Saviour and my only Master. Henceforth I regarded those who had the advantage of following M. Boudon as the happiest persons in the world, and I used every possible means to enter into close relations with him. I found the opportunity at last, and I cannot sufficiently recognise the goodness of my God in having given me so holy and so sure a guide, who counselled nothing to others which he had not himself already practised." It was remarkable that all bore a like testimony to the Archdeacon's merits at this time—not his followers alone, but even those to whom the influence he exercised in the place rendered him unwelcome. The best testimony, however, was the number of the conversions he effected, not only amongst hardened sinners, but also amongst the devoted votaries of the world.

Examples of this, taken from amongst the most distinguished families of Evreux, persons who from their station and wealth are more difficult to win to God than the lowly poor, may here be adduced. The Sieur de Pressac was so abandoned a libertine that people

looked upon him as a devil in human form. He had no more regard for religion than for morality, and it is difficult to conceive what induced such a man to enter a church or listen to a priest. Perhaps it was curiosity, perhaps it was an intention of finding matter for scoffing. The hour of grace, however, was come. He heard and was vanquished, and not a week had elapsed before Evreux beheld with astonishment the wolf transformed into the lamb, an open blasphemer into a man of prayer and seclusion from the world, a hard-hearted profligate into an angel of compassion. Despising the jeers of his former bad companions, he devoted himself night and day to the service of the suffering poor, the orphan, and the friendless, with a charity which nothing could weary or repel. He set his face as a flint against the mockery which he thus drew upon himself, and became so abject in his own eyes that in his letters he habitually signed himself the "putrid dog," and the "nothingness of nothing." No words, in short, could be strong enough to mark his horror of the abyss of iniquity from which he had been drawn. His attachment to the man who had been the instrument of rescuing him was proportionate, and he remained until death the fervent disciple and follower of Boudon. M. de Pressac entered the third order of St. Francis, and, not being permitted to carry out his desire either of going to Tonquin in company with its first missionary-bishop to seek martyrdom, or of shutting himself up in some house of correction to do penance for the remainder of his days, he strove to compensate by a life of hard and unsparring mortification for his former sins and the scandal he had given.

The conversion of a young lady of the place, whose

name is not mentioned, was not a less signal triumph of grace. She was devoted to the world and to dress, and, as we should say, led the fashion in Evreux. She went to hear the new archdeacon preach, simply because he was the interest of the hour and the talk of the place. Persons of her stamp do not like to be behind-hand where any novelty is concerned; they must see and hear everything; so she went as she might have gone to the theatre. One would have supposed that in such a state of mind she was little likely to derive any profit, and that her heart must have been so thoroughly hardened by vanity and worldliness as to be impervious to any good influence. Nevertheless grace at one stroke broke through all the opposing out-works, and the citadel was gained. Her one desire now was without delay to wash her soul in the laver of penance. It need not be said that she sought him who had inflicted the salutary wound, in order to heal it. She turned her back once and for ever on the world, and gave herself irrevocably to God in religion, entering, as soon as as she could obtain the consent of her parents, one of the most celebrated communities in Paris, which she long edified by her virtues and her fervent piety.

As frequent allusion will afterwards be made to Boudon in his capacity of director, it will be sufficient here to say that, not only was his confessional besieged, but his room was scarcely ever free from persons seeking his counsels. His sense of the value of souls and his inexhaustible charity forbade him to close his door at any hour to such as desired to have recourse to him, and as many of them belonged to classes who were employed during the greater part of the day, these conferences were often prolonged to a

very late hour of the evening. Being told, however, that this practice had led to unfavourable observations in some quarters, he thought well, not for his own relief, for this was the last thing which ever engaged his attention or influenced his actions, but to avoid all offence or possible shadow of scandal, strictly to regulate the hours during which he could receive such as applied to him for direction.



CHAPTER VII.

STATE OF THE DIOCESE OF EVREUX. OBSTACLES TO BOUDON'S EFFORTS FOR REFORM.

BOUDON'S profound humility and, doubtless, his desire also to celebrate his first Mass on a festival of our Blessed Lady, made him defer it from the first of January, the day of his ordination, to the Annunciation, which, on account of Easter, was that year transferred to the 5th of April. This was also the chief feast of the captives of Mary and, as such, specially suited to him who gloried in the title of her slave. He went to Paris, in order to pass that day in the community of the Mère Mechtilde and there unite himself more closely with the devotion of those holy women, whose one occupation was adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The cultivation of humility, continual prayer, and entire forgetfulness of the world and of self, were the objects which these religious set before them; their sympathies and aims, therefore, were entirely in unison with his, for in these Boudon placed all peace of soul

and Christian perfection. But, if he considered the spirit of self-annihilation to be essential to the true character of the religious, much more did he believe it to be requisite for the priest, who had daily to offer a God annihilating Himself in sacrifice. Accordingly, this habitually formed the matter of his preparation before approaching the altar, a preparation which sometimes lasted as long as an hour and a half. He was in the habit of saying that the spirit of eagerness and disquiet is a thief which follows a man everywhere, robbing him of the fruit of his good works and, especially, that of Mass and the holy offices. Accordingly, if he found himself moved by this seducing spirit to shorten the time, he disconcerted the tempter by prolonging it.

When engaged in celebrating, M. Bosguérard who attended his Mass daily at Evreux in the early days of Boudon's archdeaconship, tells us that he resembled an angel rather than a man ; his eyes were always cast down, his utterance calm and distinct, and the tones of his voice extremely touching. During the Canon he entered into a deep state of recollection, and his whole appearance was transformed. At the Elevation his countenance seemed to beam and his eyes to sparkle, as if they were opened to behold the scene on Calvary. When he left the altar, he again gave a considerable portion of time to prayer, offering to God all the needs of the Church and of his country ; nothing, indeed, eluded the embrace of his charity, modelled as it was on that of the Eternal Priest, in whose name and power he had been offering the Adorable Sacrifice. He always celebrated Mass with the same devotion, and, except when utterly precluded by illness, he never omitted doing so daily during the forty-six years of

life which remained to him. One day, when about to officiate before a royal personage, a member of the Prince's household having intimated a desire that he should not make his Mass longer than that of his Royal Highness's chaplains, Boudon with a holy firmness rejoined, "Sir, you may depend upon my doing what I am bound to do. I shall speak to my God with all the veneration and attention that I can, and not on any account pronounce one word the faster."

On his way to Paris, Boudon, whose mind was intent on preparing himself to fulfil the arduous duties which, as archdeacon, devolved upon him, passed by Chartres in order to see M. de Levis, Canon and Grand Penitentiary of that church as well as Archdeacon of the Vendomois. He had been a member of the Congregation directed by P. Bagot, and had been in intimate relations with several eminently holy men of the day; such as P. de Condren, P. Saint-Jure, and the Abbé Olier, with whom, indeed, in company with M. Amelote and other zealous ecclesiastics, he had been engaged on missions. Boudon from personal knowledge was aware of M. de Levis's worth and the zeal and wisdom he had displayed in the exercise of his high functions; but, above all, the contradictions and persecutions he had experienced made him particularly desirous to consult him. A secret instinct, perhaps, apprised him that in this respect there was to be a striking resemblance between them. Be this as it may, the esteem in which he held this holy ecclesiastic was so great that he never passed through Chartres without visiting him.

But Boudon was insatiable where lessons of sanctity or lights for his guidance were to be acquired. During his stay at Paris he passed some days at the Seminary

of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet, for the opportunity of seeing and conversing at leisure with Adrien Bourdoise, one of those admirable men whom God raised up in days of ecclesiastical relaxation to labour for the reformation of the clergy and the restoration of discipline. His name will ever be associated with those of St. Vincent de Paul, M. Olier, and the other great labourers in this arduous work. Bourdoise was now approaching the close of his earthly career when Boudon arrived to gather from his lips some of the last precious instructions of wisdom which he was to give. The holy man was much struck with the zeal of the young ecclesiastic who came to seek light and guidance from him, and his testimony, proceeding as it did from one who had such long experience of the dealings of God with souls, and who was favoured with such high spiritual discernment, is worthy to be recorded. It reads like a prophecy. "The great Archdeacon of Evreux," he said, "is a marvellous torch which our Lord has been pleased to kindle in His Church; he is a man full of fire and flames, who in the service of his God will consume himself in the furnace of charity, and will be one of the most illustrious personages and most holy priests of his time."

Amongst the various good counsels given by Bourdoise to Boudon, and one on which he laid peculiar stress, was to establish an ecclesiastical seminary as soon as possible at Evreux. No one was more convinced than was Bourdoise of the supreme importance of seminaries, as being the indispensable means for imparting the true clerical spirit and exalted views of the perfection necessary in those who are to be the salt of the earth. It was the want of these institutions which had been the chief bane of the Church in

France, and which had contributed more than anything, perhaps, to reduce to so deplorably a low level the tone and manners of the clergy. Bourdoise compared the forming of good clerics to the polishing of diamonds, an arduous and a lengthy process; but, then, how precious were its results! The object he considered was not to turn out a large number of priests, no matter of what sort they might be, for amongst them how few, possibly, might be found who would come up to the Church's requirements! He likened such a proceeding to the practice in vogue of ornamenting walls superficially without regard to their solid construction. The work of training men for the sacerdotal state was a solid, and, therefore, necessarily a gradual work; and none who realised this fact could be surprised at the slow progress that was made. Much, it is true, had been done, but much remained to be done, which Boudon, no doubt, knew, and of which he was to have the painful experience as soon as he entered, as he was about to do, on the duties of his charge. No cross, indeed, could be greater for a soul like his, animated with so pure and ardent a zeal for God's glory, than to see His worship neglected in all that appertained to it, nay, often treated with gross irreverence, by those whose special office it is to cause it to be respected and honoured; and this was the cross which met him at the outset of his labours. It suffices, indeed, to note the numerous passages in Boudon's works wherein he bitterly deplores the offences and outrages thus committed against the majesty of God, and, in particular, those writings of his which are specially devoted to the subject, in order to appreciate what he must have suffered—he, who thought nothing immaterial or trifling in the service of God—when

he was called to behold during his visitations the want of common cleanliness and decency prevailing in a large proportion of the churches throughout the diocese. Nothing sometimes could exceed their miserable poverty and nakedness, and such was very commonly the case, where there could be no excuse of deficient means, even in the chapels which the seigneurs were allowed by privilege to have in their châteaux ; a privilege which, it appears, they valued more from a motive of pride than of piety, although even personal pride, one might have thought, would have led them to furnish their domestic chapels decorously, if not richly. The frequent contrast, nevertheless, between the pompous retinues, the valuable plate, and the sumptuous apartments of these nobles, and the neglect of the most necessary furniture of the altar of God was only too palpable, and pained beyond expression the heart of the holy Archdeacon.

“O messieurs, O mesdames !” he exclaims with a holy indignation—in his work on the sanctity of the ecclesiastical state—“you who own these domestic chapels, do you believe in God ? Do you know what God is ? Do you believe in the real presence of His Body ? Is God of as much consequence in your eyes as some gentleman or lady who may come to see you ? Show me your faith by your works. Is your chapel as clean, as well carpeted, as the richly-furnished room in which you receive your company ? And yet it is there you receive your God. Reflect what you would do if a prince, if a king, were to honour you by lodging at your house. Are the albs used at the altar, are the linen cloths, as fine, as white, as the sheets, the tablecloths, and the napkins which you provide for persons of quality ? Is the material of the chasubles, of the

frontals of the altar, as good as that of your own clothes? What do your petticoats cost you, ladies, every year? Is there any proportion between this outlay and what you expend to adorn the altars on which abides the Body of a God? Ah, yes! it is terrible to say it, but if only the linen in the sanctuary of the God of all majesty were, at least, as fine and as clean as the neckerchiefs of your tirewomen and the maids who wait upon you! Often the dress of your lackeys is more costly than the adornments of the house of the Sovereign of all. Where will one find the place destined to receive and lodge the God of all majesty, the most richly adorned in the mansion? How, then, can persons say that they believe in God? Nay, is it possible that even ecclesiastics should be guilty of the same infidelity?" Unhappily, it must be confessed that this scandal was only too common, and Curés were to be found who were in the enjoyment of rich benefices and yet allowed the churches and chapels they served to remain in a most disgraceful condition; some of them, as Boudon elsewhere states, themselves dining off plate while the Body and Blood of the Son of God were reserved in pewter.

But this was not the worst, or, rather, it was but the outcome and result of what was worse, inasmuch as the living temples in which God desires to make His abode are more holy and precious in His eyes than the material fabric of His house or even the vessels of the sanctuary; and more especially is this true of those who are called to minister at His altar. Lacking the virtues proper for their state—and such it is clear was more or less the condition of a large proportion of the clergy of the diocese—as a natural consequence, they not only failed in due respect for their sacerdotal

functions and for divine things, but they were also guilty of lamentable dereliction of their duty as shepherds of souls. They were "dumb dogs," an epithet which Boudon does not scruple to apply to them, leaving their flocks without religious instruction, and allowing the children to grow up without knowledge of the Catechism. "There is much cause to sigh," writes the pious Archdeacon, "when one reflects on the great number of parishes in which the poor people are in the most utter ignorance—we speak of what we know—receiving no lights from their pastors, who content themselves with performing their exterior functions; pastors and people living and dying in this deplorable condition. Here is the cause of the wretched state of numbers of Christians, who scarcely know what being a Christian means, who are so but in name, who come into our churches and approach the sacraments at Easter because their fathers and grandfathers did so, observing all these things without knowing what they do. These are facts of which we have often had experience." It was well when unworthy pastors such as are here indicated—men who for the most part had entered the sanctuary without vocation and for the sake of the benefices they thereby enjoyed—did not to neglect of their sacred duties add the example of a scandalous life. As it may be imagined, along with ignorance, immorality and numberless abuses prevailed in the unhappy parishes served—a misnomer, as here applied, if ever there was one—by priests of this character. Sundays and festivals were profaned by gambling, dances, and drunkenness. Superstitious observances abounded, and even institutions which had been good and holy in their beginnings, and were so still in their professed aim, had in practice utterly

degenerated; such, for instance, as confraternities, which no longer favoured piety, but were a simple occasion for merry-makings and tumultuous gatherings.

Such was the humiliating state of things in the diocese of which Boudon had been given the oversight. Pained as he was at the spectacle it presented, he was not discouraged. Discouragement, indeed, was a sentiment unknown to him, as was also its opposite, elation, both of which have their spring in a resting on self. The Lord was his stay; self had long before been disposed of, and may be said to have been dead and buried ever since his childhood. "*Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini, qui fecit cælum et terram.*" He who made can unmake. Full of this conviction, Boudon had armed himself for his work; and his preparation had been in accordance with this conviction. Prayer, fasting, pilgrimages, an increase in acts of mortification—such were the means by which he had sought to bring God to his aid, the God whose strength is manifested in weakness. At all times of the year it was his custom to keep three fasts each week, but during the time of his visitations, when he had often to undergo very great fatigue, which might have seemed, in modern medical phraseology, to call for more "support," he fasted every day without exception. If he could have followed his own inclination, he would never have made use during his journeys of anything but an ass; but this not being considered befitting, he yielded the point, taking care, however, to make up for the sacrifice of this act of humiliation by selecting the sorriest-looking horse which could be procured. Everything else was in keeping; what was poorest and meanest being always preferred by him whenever his own person was concerned. Worldly prudence

might have dictated a very different mode of proceeding; it might have suggested that, considering the elements to be dealt with, a little more official state and show would have been desirable. Too many of the clergy, it might be feared, would misconstrue this abdication of dignity on the part of their superior, and be less disposed to submit to any reforms proposed to them. But Boudon viewed things otherwise. He believed that the more he humbled himself—and to him this had become a kind of second nature—the more surely would God's work advance; as he had said in his letter to the Curés of the diocese, all would prosper if "the poor Archdeacon were well destroyed and annihilated."

Notwithstanding, however, his entire confidence in God, of whom he esteemed himself but the miserable instrument, he was penetrated with an intimate sense of his own fearful responsibility. The idea would at times arise in such a vivid form before his mind as to impress it with terror. "Fear invades me on every side," he says, "when I reflect that, having a hundred and sixty parishes dependent on my inspection, if amongst the whole number of their inhabitants one single individual be devoid of the knowledge needful for salvation, and if this arise either from my not having sufficiently applied myself during my visitations to provide a remedy, as I am bound to do, or from not having reported these things fully to my Bishop, I am worse than a homicide, who kills the body, since I am the cause, by my lack of care, of the loss of grace to a soul for all eternity; but supposing I am the cause of that loss to a great number!" His first step, however, was to deal with what was external, what met and shocked the eye and was a palpable scandal to all,

the disgraceful state of the churches and cemeteries, the latter being not unfrequently left without railing or used as pasture-ground for cattle. He examined the accounts of monies received or due, and caused vessels of silver to be substituted for those of copper and tin in the service of the altar. He repaired the dilapidated walls and decayed woodwork, and took away the rags and tatters which often did duty for the proper furniture and decoration of the sanctuary. He also removed all indecorous pictures or images calculated to minister to anything but piety, replacing them by others more suitable. These and the like, which it would take long to enumerate, were his first acts of reform. The next object of his attention was the sanctification of the people. He obliged those pastors who had hitherto performed their duty superficially, or had neglected it altogether, to catechise publicly, at least on every Sunday. This was, in his eyes, so important a part of the ministry that it led him to compose a work* on the subject, from which quotations have already been made. In this work he sets forth most strongly the obligation resting on every parish priest to teach the Catechism to his flock, and by teaching he meant not merely causing it to be learned by rote, but training those who thus committed it to memory to answer pertinently to any examination on the subject; for he showed by examples drawn from his own personal experience, that knowledge acquired by rote is often no real knowledge at all, as may easily be discovered by varying the ques-

* *La Science Sacrée du Catechisme. Œuvres complètes, T. i. p. 975.* This little work, besides containing a startling picture of the neglect of religious instruction so prevalent, especially in the country parishes, is full of excellent practical advice as to the manner in which children should be catechised.

tions put to the children and changing the terms employed. Such learning, therefore, which in kind differs not from what a parrot may acquire, will be found compatible with the absence of all saving knowledge of the truths of the faith.

There was no parish in which, during the course of his visitation, he did not himself preach once at least. He cared not if the hearers were few or many. It was the same to him, who sought only the glory of God, and who vividly realised how God's glory was implicated in the salvation of one single soul. He is described as speaking with so much fire and energy of the necessity of doing penance that, before calumny had aspersed his character, he was regarded as a messenger come from Heaven with a sword of justice in one hand, ready to strike, and a last proffer of mercy in the other. In all his discourses his aim was to elevate his hearers' conception of God, to deepen both their fear and their love of Him, and to make them feel that the whole happiness of man consists in serving that great and sovereign Lord, our supreme and only good. He then proceeded to instruct them how to approach the sacraments worthily. He did not say many things at once, but he spoke with so much unction, and knew so well how to illustrate his subject with well-chosen and familiar examples and comparisons, that both the heart was moved and the intellect enlightened. Even the children used to be able to understand and follow what he said. He had an admirable fecundity of ideas, and could vary the same topic to an indefinite extent. He has been known, for instance, to preach no less than eight sermons in Evreux, on the same day, all in honour of our Blessed Lady, and all differing in detail and treatment.

In every parish he made out a list of notorious sinners, as also of those who failed in their Pascal duty. He would go and seek them out in their houses, and even follow them into the fields where they were at work. There he would speak to them with the most fatherly kindness. When his remonstrances took effect—and many even of the most hardened yielded to his appeals—he would tenderly embrace them, and make them every demonstration of affection. But if they resisted him to his face, his plan was, not to tease or weary them with any fresh entreaties, but to pray for them that God might move their hearts in His own good time. He was greatly adverse to any harsh or imperious language on such occasions, and used to tell those Curés who were in the habit of employing it that, instead of gaining souls, it was calculated only to irritate the temper and excite a hatred against their own persons, which would keep sinners aloof from them all their days. His eye was everywhere, and there was not an evil or an abuse which he did not set his hand to remedy or remove. But here he was met by two great obstacles during the early years of his office. The first arose from the state of the clergy themselves, whose lives formed the third and most essential object of his investigations, for on what they were all else depended. As the priest, so the people. When he entered the sacristy and the presbytery and questioned the Curés, as he was bound to do, respecting the manner in which they discharged the different duties of their sacred calling, he was frequently far from meeting with a pleasant reception. Many of these priests, as has been observed, had entered holy orders merely as a profession whereby to make a comfortable subsistence, and not a few had adopted or

profited by means simply simoniacal to obtain their benefices. Accustomed to their own self-indulgent ways, like all unmortified persons, they more or less resented interference. Obstinacy is of two sorts: that which proceeds from prejudice and that which proceeds from the will. The former may be overcome, the latter is intractable. It is also irritable, for it does not wish to be convinced; it does not intend to be convinced. Of this character was the obstinacy with which Boudon had too often to deal. It was in vain, then, that, acting on M. Bourdoise's advice, which, indeed, was in accordance with his own natural disposition, he addressed these offenders with the utmost gentleness; it was in vain that he behaved to them with the most considerate and delicate forbearance, presuming the best of them, a mode of proceeding which in most cases is calculated to elicit the best, entreating rather than using authority, and striving by every means in his power to enlist them as willing assistants in the reform of their parishes. It was impossible to move men who were firmly determined to have their own way. On the other hand, when he met with hearty co-operators, pastors who lived in a manner worthy of their profession, he could scarcely contain his joy, and took every opportunity of publicly commending them; giving them his full support, and, when occasion served, even procuring them promotion. These exceptional cases were his rich consolation.

Nothing, perhaps, more pained the tender heart of Boudon than the hardness which some of the Curés evinced, not only in respect to the spiritual needs of their flocks, but even in the matter of their temporal wants. They ate, they drank, they hunted, they gamed, and found money for all these things, but

for the poor of Christ they could find nothing. They altogether lacked bowels of compassion; they lacked what often abounds even in those who are devoid of supernatural charity, natural pity and bountifulness. "*Corruptio optimi pessima*—the corruption of what is best is worst." When a priest is bad, his whole character seems to become perverted and deteriorated in exact proportion to the exalted grace he has received and to which he has proved unfaithful. When Boudon found persuasion fail with these men he spoke out strongly, and endeavoured to strike terror into their souls by recording examples which had occurred within his own experience of the tragic end which often awaits those who refuse themselves nothing while they remain callous to the prayers and unmoved by the miseries of the indigent and suffering poor. When entreaties and menaces proved alike unavailing, the obvious measure, in the case of priests who were resolved to persevere in the flagrant violation of their duty, was to visit them with censures, and suspend them from their functions. Yet it would appear that, for the present, Boudon was generally obliged to limit himself to stirring exhortations and grave remonstrances; and this, not because he himself shrank from applying the proper corrective, but because, in order to proceed to any such exercise of authority, he must have the sanction of his Bishop, of whom he was only the representative. Here it is that we meet with the second obstacle which he had to encounter in the way of practical reform. Mgr. Gilles Boutault was a good man and valued his Archdeacon, but he was old. If ever he had been energetic, he was no longer so; he was like one who had done his work, and does not care to be roused to further action. He had got into his groove, and had apparently no mind

to upset his diocese or to be himself upset. Perhaps he had become inured to a state of things which he could not approve, but which he judged to be irremediable; perhaps the effort which an attempt to cope with the evil would have required may have seemed to him at his age a kind of moral impossibility. So it was at least; he would not, or he could not, make the effort. The slothful man says, "There is a lion in the way and a lioness in the roads;" and this may be considered to apply also to that inertness which in some men accompanies declining years. But, from whatever cause it may proceed, sloth never fails to find a thousand prudential reasons for its vindication. "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceits than seven men that speak sentences."* When such a man is in authority, there is, of course, no reply to be made; no redress can be expected; matters are at a stand-still. No wonder if their consciousness of the passive disposition of their Bishop should have emboldened recalcitrant Curés to resist the Archdeacon, since they could do so with impunity; at least with impunity from temporal damage.

But if unmoved by his admonitions in one way, they were not so in another; their tempers were much ruffled, and great murmurings arose amongst them against the troublesome disciplinarian who had come to disturb their repose. Not only were they resolved not to change their own mode of life, but in many instances they refused to co-operate in the removal of abuses from their parishes in the continuance of which they had no personal interest. Amongst other scandals, for example, which were more or less common in many parts of France, was the practice of kindling bonfires on St. John's Eve, which gave occasion to much license

* Proverbs xxvi. 13, 16.

and immorality. This practice was notoriously prevalent in the diocese of Evreux. M. Bourdoise had called Boudon's attention to this matter before he entered on his first visitation, and had written a little tract on the subject, copies of which he had given to the young priest, together with a few other short works on ecclesiastical discipline and good order in churches, for distribution among the clergy. Those priests whose piety disposed them to follow his advice received these books in a becoming spirit, but the pride of the party of opposition was irritated by what they regarded as an indirect mode of administering reproof. Accordingly they determined to act upon nothing which was suggested to them, lest their acquiescence in one point should encourage interference in others. The indecorous scenes to which the fires on St. John's Eve gave rise were especially disgraceful in the vicinity of L'Aigle, a town of Normandy belonging at that period to the diocese of Evreux, but now included in that of Seez. Yet it was here that Boudon encountered the most marked resistance to his views. A Curé, to whom he wrote on the subject, took his communication very ill, even asserting that the Archdeacon was overstepping the limits of his authority, and so far forgot the respect due to him as to indulge in a strain of most unpardonable banter. Boudon was deeply pained, not for himself, but on account of the disedification such a pastor must give to his flock. Writing to M. Bourdoise, he alluded to the subject, but that man of God, who looked upon contradictions and humiliations both as pledges of success and as the choicest favours which could be received, wrote in return in terms of warm congratulation. "Oh," he exclaims, "how happy would Adrien Bourdoise be if he were to hear that the great Arch-

deacon of Evreux had been stoned or crucified for having desired to contribute to the sanctification of the clergy !”

This was quite to Boudon's taste, and had the invigorating effect of a drop of cordial to him. He energetically continued his labours for reform, but with limited results, especially in the country parts ; in the towns, and particularly in Evreux, he had better success. Nevertheless, when speaking of his failure to introduce reforms in country districts, on account of the obstinacy of the Curés in resisting any innovation, it must not be supposed that he effected no good, for his influence on individuals cannot have been slight. Not content with making his official visitation, which was all that was incumbent on him, he used, as soon as his round was over, to set out on a kind of missionary tour from one town or village to another, preaching and announcing the kingdom of God, going wherever the Spirit of God moved him or His Providence led him ; for this seems to have been his way. He usually left Evreux without any determined plan, having previously made a retreat, in which he besought God to send him wherever the interests of His glory would be most advanced. He was the child of Divine Providence, and, as appears from countless passages in his letters, placed himself always, as it were, blindfold in the hands of this his good Mistress and Mother. Soon an impression, an impulse, which resembled inspiration, would come upon him, and then he journeyed on towards the selected place without letting any know whither he was bound. This was a sweet little artifice of his, much to be commended to the consideration of those who are given to talking over their proposed good undertakings with anybody and everybody. There is an invisible

enemy on the watch, whose name is Legion, bent on defeating or marring every project for God's glory and the good of souls. Now, Boudon had remarked that when his secret had transpired, the devil was beforehand with him, and had been busy indisposing and prejudicing men's minds against him. So he resolved to keep him in the dark as long as possible. People may think this idea fanciful, but, previously to accepting such a conclusion, it is well to recollect that one who, like Boudon, lived in the world unseen more than in the world of sense, was likely to know and perceive secrets belonging to the supernatural order which are quite beyond the ken of ordinary Christians. Abundant proofs, at any rate, remain, to some of which we shall hereafter allude, which demonstrate that it was no accident—if, indeed, anything in life can properly be so called—which directed the steps of the servant of God ; for no sooner had he arrived at the destined spot than he was sure to find a number of spiritually afflicted persons, who, destitute of the help needed in their cases, seemed to have been awaiting his arrival, as heretofore the sick lay expecting the angel at the pool of Bethesda.

We may conclude this subject by an anecdote of which we cannot fix the precise date. A gentleman who possessed the right of nomination to several benefices being one day present at a numerous gathering of Curés, the conversation turned upon the character and conduct of the Archdeacon. It became immediately very animated, and many who would have been as cold as stones in the pulpit, when the great interests of eternity were their theme, were all fire and vivacity where it was question of criticising and maligning an absent and innocent individual. The gentleman listened a while in silence ; and then, breaking in all at once on

the comfortable flow of abuse, he said in a grave tone, "Gentlemen, I am not acquainted with the Archdeacon; I have only heard him spoken of; but permit me to ask you how he can be what you depict him, seeing that so large a number of honourable and excellent persons say all that is good of him? You make him out to be a very devil. May not the truth of the matter be that he wants to make you angels?" This remark, it may be supposed, coming, as it did, from one who had large Church preferment at his disposal, not a little discomfited the members of this pious conference.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOUDON AS A DIRECTOR AND A MISSIONARY.

It was very clear now that, whatever might be effected towards the improvement of the bad state of things in the diocese, no thorough reform could be brought about at present; not only because the active support of the Bishop was wanting, but because many of the Curés were too inveterately worldly to be morally reclaimable, while others, who were better disposed, had lacked that ecclesiastical training which is so necessary to the formation of a solidly good priest, and, in the absence of a higher standard of piety among their brethren, did not possess the advantage of good models and edifying examples, which alone could have compensated for the deficiency in their own education. A seminary, which would be a nursery of fresh and vigorous plants, holy and zealous young priests, who might gradually replace the present clergy

as, one by one, they dropped off, and leaven with their piety and their spirit of discipline the whole diocese, was what was wanted and what Boudon intensely desired. But as yet it could not be thought of; all that the Archdeacon could do as a substitute for this most essential institution in Evreux itself, was to single out youths whom he believed to have the signs of a true vocation, and, after duly examining them, to send them to Paris, there to go through their seminary course, the expense of which should be defrayed by the help of friends, who were willing to second him in his good undertakings. The seed which he thus early sowed came to fruitful maturity in a few years, and the priests whom he was thereby the means of securing for the diocese were the joy and consolation of his old age.

We have seen what an extraordinary gift for spiritual direction Boudon possessed, even while yet a layman, nay, it may be said, a mere boy, when, as has been related, his companions and seniors in age would have recourse to his counsels with much profit to their souls, not scrupling to lay bare their consciences to him. We have seen also how, later, in a manner almost inexplicable, his reputation had moved holy religious, souls familiar with the highest paths of perfection, to correspond with him from all parts of France, deeming themselves greatly favoured if he could be induced to impart to them of the abundance of his lights. Now that he had received power to act as the minister and representative of his Lord, along with all those gifts and graces which belong to the priestly character, we may imagine how marvellous was the influence which he exercised. Besides the affluence of penitents, who thronged round his confes-

sional, he had a number of persons under his special direction. Many excellent directors have but a limited range of capabilities. They are qualified for the guidance of some souls and not for that of others, for whom they seem to possess no lights; even the same individual, at a more advanced stage, may derive advantage from a change, although he may hitherto have been directed with judgment and discrimination. In saying thus much, we are but stating what is acknowledged by spiritual writers as a recognised fact. Without entering further into the subject, it may be observed in passing that, the real Director being the Holy Ghost and not the priest, whose office is rather to discern the character of the work of grace in his penitent's soul, and thus be in a position to remove the impediments out of the way of the Interior Teacher, much must necessarily depend upon his own knowledge of God's dealings with souls, whether acquired experimentally or through prayerful study of mystical theology; and where that experience is limited, and science also deficient, it is obvious that the director cannot be equal to the task of helping those who are being led along difficult and extraordinary paths; nay, more, he must be liable to misunderstand peculiar cases, especially those of persons afflicted with supernatural trials and suffering from interior pains, which may be confounded by him with ordinary temptations, and treated accordingly, to the great discouragement and, perhaps, detriment of such souls.

Boudon, who had led an interior life from his very childhood, and had, besides, devoted himself assiduously to the study of all that could instruct him in spiritual matters, whether contained in books or to be derived from communication with persons of eminent holiness,

whom he sought out with unwearying diligence, had early passed, as has been observed, through a long period of aridities, deprivation of all sensible action of grace, and all those other searching processes whereby, as gold is purified in the furnace, God often refines those favoured souls whom He designs to fashion as vessels of election. Accordingly, he was able to exercise the highest discernment in directing persons at every stage of spiritual progress, and, in particular, he had a great gift for understanding the states to which allusion has been made, and for consoling and supporting those who were thus sorely tried. What was more remarkable, however, was that he seemed often to have a kind of prescience on the subject, and to have gone to the rescue of souls in distress as if an angel had been sent to fetch him.

On the occasion of his first visit to Evreux a case of this sort occurred. In the Abbey of Saint-Sauveur there was at that time a religious enduring great interior trials. Whether Boudon had become casually acquainted with the fact, which, however, was hardly likely, or was supernaturally apprised of it, does not appear, but, unless divinely moved to proffer his aid, it is scarcely probable that, unsought and undesired, he would have intruded his spiritual counsels or ministrations on any one. Be this as it may, he repaired to the Abbey and asked for this nun. While waiting for her, he knelt down in prayer in a corner of the parlour. When she appeared and inquired of him the object of his visit, "I come for you," he replied. "I assure you," rejoined the religious, "that I have nothing to say to you, and if I wished to open my mind to any one, I should not select a person so young as you apparently are." "Allow me, at least," said Boudon,

to continue my prayer." This she willingly permitted, and retired. Perhaps she related the strange circumstance to her sisters, and it may have furnished matter for a little innocent mirth. A certain curiosity and uneasiness led the nun, however, to return an hour later to the parlour, where she found her visitor still fervently praying. She gave him nevertheless no more encouragement than before, and he might have considered himself as having received his dismissal. At this moment the bell rang to summon the Sisters to the choir for their office, and she now felt herself suddenly assailed by great anguish of spirit, to which the meditation which followed added fresh fuel. Amongst the many thoughts which crowded on her mind in disjointed succession, the remembrance of a face once shown to her, with an inward intimation that this was he who should heal the wounds of her soul, recurred to her, and it struck her that it greatly resembled that of the ecclesiastic whom she had but just now so curtly dismissed. Hurrying back, therefore, as soon as she was at liberty, she was glad to find her visitor still where she had left him, and, after a few brief apologies, proceeded to make known to him the state of her soul, and to listen with docility to his counsels. From that moment all her pains ceased, being removed as instantaneously as was the leprosy of Naaman by the waters of Jordan.

Later, when Boudon had entered on his office, we meet with a somewhat similar occurrence. The prioress of a Carmelite convent in Brittany was undergoing severe interior sufferings, and, although in her neighbourhood there was no lack of enlightened and learned priests, none could succeed in relieving her desolation of spirit. They had, in fact, so high an opinion of her

sanctity, that this very circumstance made her mistrust their decisions. One evening, unable to find any rest, she besought the Son of God, in the simplicity of her heart, to send her a priest in whom she might repose confidence. On the following day she was informed that M. Boudon was come, and had asked for her. "I was the more surprised at this," she said, "as I knew him to be at a distance of five and twenty leagues, and the winter was far advanced, when the roads in that country are impracticable. After he had finished his acts of adoration of the Blessed Trinity, and had saluted the holy angels, which he never failed to do on entering a town, my first question was what could have brought him there at such a season. 'It is you who have brought me,' he replied." A little bewildered by an assertion which appeared almost incredible to her, the nun asked him if he intended to make any stay in the country, to which he promptly answered that he should remain as long as she had need of him, for it was on her account alone that he had come. "This stroke of Divine Providence," she said, "furnished me with the means of exposing with facility and openness of heart the subject of my sufferings, and I so fully found their remedy in this true servant of God that from that happy day I never experienced the least return of them." This journey of Boudon's, made for the sake of a single soul, proved of great profit also to several religious houses, which engaged him to give them retreats.

We find similar testimony given by all those nuns who had the opportunity of hearing the Archdeacon. They thought they could not sufficiently thank the Providence of God for leading his steps in their direction. But it was not alone on soil so well prepared

that the word sown by this gifted labourer was so rich in fruit. The results were, in their kind, no less striking when he addressed mixed congregations, and it is on record that he often had to pause and interrupt the flow of his discourse in order to allow the sobs of his hearers to subside and their passionate tears to be checked. But what was far more satisfactory than all this emotion, was to see the more solid effects of his preaching: the crowded confessionals, the numerous restitutions, the sincere conversions, which everywhere attended his progress; for it was in the tribunal of penance that the great Archdeacon used to complete the work which he had begun in the pulpit. He was admirable in his discernment of the heart and of the sincerity of its return to God. Hence, while gentle and compassionate to the truly contrite, however far they might have strayed from God, he had a just dread of too much facility in giving absolution, which when pronounced without due evidence of genuine reform, he esteemed to be both a grievous fault in the confessor and the ruin of the sinner.

His great study in all who sought his direction was to discover the species and degree of the grace given to each, for he knew that God has His special designs in regard of every soul He has created, and has traced the particular path along which His Spirit would lead it. To thwart or fail to forward these Divine purposes was in his eyes a grave fault in a director, if it proceeded from neglect or from culpable ignorance on his part; a great misfortune, if it was the consequence of a mistake. From such mistakes science alone could not secure, and he was persuaded therefore that, in leading souls on to perfection, much more reliance must be placed on prayer than on study, as without prayer

the most learned doctor may only hinder the work of God. Hence, so far from jealously desiring to retain under his charge those whom he was directing, he left them the fullest liberty of consulting others, according as they might feel drawn, being persuaded that to put the slightest restraint on persons in this respect is to run the risk of thwarting the Spirit of God, and inflicting irreparable injury on souls. Thus, as he never desired that his penitents should attach themselves to him, so neither did he, notwithstanding his overflowing charity, ever attach himself to them. He used to say that it was necessary to keep a strict watch over the inclinations, which often prompt us to be more ready to help those whom we naturally prefer. Charity in him was both tender and inexhaustible, but it was a supernatural love which excluded all imperfect human elements.

Above all, he would have priests and directors retrench mercilessly everything like intimacy with women. The danger, he said, was the greater that friendship, in this case, was so prone to clothe itself under the pretext of gratitude, or the greater good of the penitent, to whom such condescension appeared to be beneficial. Nothing was easier than for self-love to step in and mix itself up in these connections. Yet he directed, as we shall find, many women with much charity, and was bound by the ties of spiritual friendship with not a few; a charity and friendship, however, quite compatible with the reserve he recommended and practised. Nevertheless, it was on this very point that calumny was hereafter to assail him, and that he was to suffer prolonged humiliations, which to his pure soul would have been most excruciating had not crosses been his delight. Irreproachable as his conduct had

ever been, and guided as it was by the same prudential rules which he so strongly enjoined on others, yet his experience of what malice could do in the way of distorting the most harmless incidents, and fabricating the grossest calumnies on the same groundless basis, served, no doubt, to intensify his sense of the necessity of extreme caution and to quicken his keen perception, by the divine light afforded to him, of the danger which might accrue in consequence of the least deviation from the most rigid discretion in this respect. For, writing to his friend, M. Bosguérard, towards the close of his life, he says, "Oh! how true it is that reserve must be practised with women, and particularly in the matter of direction: this is what I could never sufficiently express. I have not always had upon this subject the lights which are now given me. Once again, I say it cannot be sufficiently insisted upon." He adds, however—in reply to some observation of his friend concerning a pious Congregation of women—"I do not see that you ought on that account not to take charge of the association which you have in your parish. Only you must practise much reserve, and endeavour gently to teach them to pray more than to talk."

Among the ladies of distinction, as regarded both rank and piety, who were directed by Boudon, the two Princesses de Bouillon deserve a foremost place, Louise and Mauricette Fébronie, the latter of whom was married in 1658 to the Landgrave of Leuchtenberg, Duke of Bavaria. The Duchesse de Bouillon, who never recovered the loss of her husband, had died in 1657, leaving these young daughters under Boudon's direction. He could not, however, be prevailed upon to continue to lodge in their *hôtel*, but took occasion of the death of the Duchess to move into an obscure lodging,

which was much more in accordance with his love of poverty than an apartment in a rich palace. We find M^{lle}. de Bouillon, in a letter written to him some years later, expressing her unabated regret that he had not consented to remain, but he was inexorable in resisting offers of this kind. Yet, although he thus declined to avail himself of any personal favour, he employed his influence with this lady, who consecrated her whole time and well-nigh her whole fortune to the service of God and the relief of the poor, to promote the interests of religion. A terrible profanation took place in one of the parishes of Evreux, through the negligence of those who had the care of the Tabernacle. Some children, having entered the church and found the key of the Tabernacle, opened it, took out the Sacred Species, and communicated each other.* Boudon, deeply pained at this outrage committed against the Adorable Sacrament, called upon all pious souls to repair the scandal, and obtained from the Bishop permission to have a procession, with an act of reparation, in the Church of St. Pierre, where it had occurred. The crowds which attended and the devotion exhibited proved that, notwithstanding the many prevalent abuses, the spirit of faith had still a very strong hold on the population even of the towns. The Archdeacon profited by the occasion to institute a Confraternity designed to render special honour to the Blessed Sacrament. M^{lle}. de Bouillon desired to be the first enrolled, and her example attracted many others. Each person had a special day for adoration, but this young princess

* The boy who suggested this act to the rest afterwards became a priest, and, in reparation, founded a yearly Mass to be celebrated on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

was to be seen every day at noon kneeling at the altar. The associates also instructed the ignorant, and prepared children for their first communion, but, above all, they prayed. How much M^{lle}. de Bouillon's zeal contributed to the establishment of this devotion in several parishes of Evreux may be inferred from Boudon's dedication to her in after years of his little work on the Love of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Besides forming this association, he instituted devout pilgrimages to a chapel near Evreux, where Mary was invoked as Notre Dame de Bon Secours; this devoted client of the angels also instituted a Congregation in their honour. It was in a chapel dedicated to St. Michael, on the slope of a hill commanding the town, that the associates used to meet every Tuesday to pay their homage to all the angelic hierarchies, as well as on the feasts consecrated to their honour. The Revolution profaned this holy spot, and not a trace remains either of the edifice or of the chapel where the Confraternity used to assemble to invoke the Mother of God. Nevertheless the *cultus* of the angels instituted by Boudon still survives in Evreux. The associates meet for their devotions in the chapel where he used to say Mass. The Holy Sacrifice is offered every Tuesday for the same intentions for which he used to offer It at St. Michel; and the Blessed Sacrament is ever reserved there, as if, says the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, to console his ashes, which rest under the altar-step.

Among the persons who were zealous in promoting his pious undertakings, and who either were remarkable for their virtue or were connected with the subsequent events of his life, may be named M. Bosguérard, a fast friend from his very first appearance at Evreux, to whom a large proportion of those

letters of Boudon which have been preserved are addressed ; M. and M^{me}. de Berville, who were converted by the sermons he preached in the Church of St. Pierre ; M^{me}. de Rouves and M^{lle}. d'Outrebois, who learned from him to dedicate their lives to works of devotion and mercy ; M^{me}. Lefèvre, who ministered piously to his needs up to the time of his death, thus compensating by her affectionate solicitude for the hired attendance which he ever refused to himself ; M^{me}. de Fourneaux, who was made the unhappy pretext of the calumnies with which he was assailed ; and M^{me}. Simon, called in religion Marie Angélique de la Providence, who during her life, as after her death, was esteemed a marvel of sanctity. This holy woman was led by ways so extraordinary and sublime that Boudon, who had committed to writing some of the details for the edification of a few pious souls, would not publish the manuscript, thinking that there was not sufficient faith, humility, or simplicity in the world at large to appreciate, or even, possibly, to credit, the mysterious trials to which she had been subjected.*

The direction of pious souls and the evangelisation of the diocese of which he was the archdeacon did not, however, suffice to satisfy Boudon's zeal. His attraction for missionary work, which had originally inspired him with the desire to go and preach the Gospel to the heathen, now made him long to extend the sphere of his labours. The hardships, difficulties, and frequent contradictions and opposition which in those days attended the giving of missions in towns and country places, and, above all, their entirely unremunerative

* This work was published after Boudon's death under the title, *L'Amour de Dieu Seul, ou Vie de la Sœur Marie-Angélique de la Providence.*

character, were only so many incentives to his charity and self-devotion. It is very difficult, or rather, impossible, to fix the period of all the missions which this zealous priest conducted, owing to his practice of affixing no date to his letters save that of the festival on which he wrote. Heavenly things were the sole landmarks, so to say, in the horizon of his spiritualised mind. The omission is therefore characteristic of the man. Moreover, very many of his letters are irretrievably lost. Those which remain, however, frequently furnish internal evidence for arriving at an approximation to chronological order.

It was in Flanders that he gave his first missions beyond the borders of the Evreux diocese. He started after he had made his visitation round in the spring, returning in time to recommence in the autumn; a rule to which he punctually adhered to whatever part of France or of any other country he might in the meantime have directed his steps. We find him at Brussels on the 25th of June, in the year 1657; and a letter which he received at that time from the superioress of the Discalced Carmelites at Mons, shows us that he was expected in that city, where they offered him a lodging in their house, which it appears he had accepted on some previous occasion. He received powers from the Archbishop of Cambrai to evangelise his whole diocese, and, as that prelate happened to be then at Mons, he punctually attended all Boudon's sermons, and wished him always to dine at his table. Boudon visited successively Valenciennes, Lille, Tournai, Anvers, and Namur, and God so abundantly blessed his labours that the holy man's heart overflowed with joy. He was peculiarly drawn to love this people, whom he called "his good Flemings," from the simpli-

city of their faith; and, as he observed that their religious knowledge was by no means proportioned to their willingness to learn, he was led subsequently to repeat his visits more than once. It was on the first occasion that he made the acquaintance of the Duchesse d'Areberg, who, in concert with the Princesse de Chimai, was afterwards instrumental in causing many of his works to be printed and circulated in Flanders. He was in correspondence with these ladies during the whole of his life.

Notwithstanding the success of this first mission, it was some years before he undertook any other beyond the bounds of the diocese of Evreux, which absorbed all his time and attention. It is certain, however, that in the course of his life he evangelised, not only a large portion of France, but several adjoining districts, on one occasion, indeed, even travelling as far as Bavaria. Of this latter mission we shall hereafter speak more in detail. His practice was to set out on his journey with perhaps as much money as would suffice for a day's expenditure, but, except on some very few occasions, when God was pleased to satisfy His servant's love of poverty, he wanted for nothing, nay, he abounded. He himself tells us that he could easily have become a rich man, for, when about to leave a place, money poured in upon him from all sides, and often he would find purses full of gold lying on the table in his room. But this child of Providence would never depart from his rule of leaving it to God to provide for the morrow; accordingly, he always distributed what exceeded his immediate needs among the poor of the place. Everywhere, indeed, he was treated far better than he desired; and when he would resume his laborious journey—and travelling was a

veritable toil in those days—noble ladies and Presidents' wives, his historian tells us, vied with each other in proffering their carriages for his conveyance, and would themselves often follow him to neighbouring towns that they might continue to profit by his instructions. While thus the object of unsought-for attentions, Boudon's visits along the road were not paid to the great ones of the earth, but to the mighty dead, those Christian heroes whose souls are living in glory above. Wherever he bent his steps he sought to kindle fresh fervour and love in his own heart by paying saints and saintly personages the homage of his devotion in those places which they had illustrated by their virtues; and it was always his endeavour to obtain, if possible, some portion of their relics. Thus at Antwerp he visited the tomb of the Venerable Anne de Saint-Barthélemy, the faithful companion of St. Teresa, to whom France was so deeply indebted for the establishment of the Carmelites on her soil. Thus also he visited with much pious veneration the resting-place of one less widely known on earth than the leader of the Carmelite band imported by the Cardinal de Bérulle, but endowed with a truly seraphic soul, the poor maid-servant, Armelle Nicolas; that of the great missionary, Michel le Noblets, renowned for his zeal and miracles; and many others both in Brittany and elsewhere. Truly his conversation was ever in Heaven.

To the various works at which we have thus hastily glanced Boudon continued to add the labours entailed upon him by the relations he had established with numerous convents. We have seen how, while yet only a secular, his counsels were sought, and with what sentiments little short of veneration he was regarded,

by many holy religious within their walls. Now that he was raised to the sacred ministry, he was able to devote himself in a higher and more effectual manner to their spiritual interests, and this he did so far as other duties permitted. The Benedictine community of the Mère Mechtilde was always singularly dear to him, and a letter, still extant, from that religious proves that he gave up to them the whole Lent of 1658. There was not a convent in the diocese of Evreux, so rich at that time in communities of women, which did not enjoy the advantage of hearing him preach several times in the course of the year; whilst the number of communities in Paris, Rouen, Chartres, and its environs, which were already objects of his solicitude, suffered no diminution of his attention. He bestowed special care on the Abbey of Neubourg, in Upper Normandy. M^{me}. de Créqui, its abbess, had found herself invested with this dignity at an age when it is better to be learning obedience than filling an office of command; but she had accepted it reluctantly, constrained by deference to the will of an aunt, who had resigned in her favour. Such abuses were much too common in those times. Fortunately, this young superioress was alive to her responsibilities and dreaded the perils of her elevation. Accordingly, finding herself deprived by death of the support and advice of the good prioress of the convent, she herself had recourse to Boudon to aid her by his wisdom and counsels in the discharge of her duties. It was with reference to this youthful abbess that Boudon made a reply which gives evidence of that strict reserve which he practised with regard to women. Being one day asked whether M^{me}. de Créqui was as beautiful as she

was reported to be, "I must confess," he answered, "that I have never looked at her."

Such is the merest outline of the labours which occupied the first few years of Boudon's archdeaconship, years when he may be said to have been labouring almost alone and unsupported.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW BISHOP OF EVREUX—OPPOSITION EXCITED AGAINST BOUDON—HIS ILLNESS.

THE death of Mgr. Gilles Boutault, on the 11th of March, 1661, led to the inauguration of a better order of things. Henri de Maupas, Bishop of Puy en Velay, was designated as his successor. All who ardently desired to see an ecclesiastical reform in the diocese of Evreux had reason to rejoice at this appointment, for Mgr. de Maupas deservedly enjoyed a very high reputation from his wise administration of the diocese of Puy. He had entered the clerical state young, sacrificing the advantages which would have accrued to him as eldest son in his family, and at the early age of fourteen had given himself up unreservedly to the service of God. The maxims and counsels of St. Vincent de Paul contributed to nourish in his heart a high sense of the vocation and obligations of the priesthood, and Mgr. de Maupas may well be reckoned amongst the number of those Apostolic men who, formed in the school of St. Lazare, became subsequently models to the rest of the clergy. He was a man inflexible in his

faith and full of zeal for the honour of God. So deeply did he feel any insult offered to the Divine Majesty that, if he heard the name of God blasphemed in the streets, he would alight from his carriage to reprove the offenders; and that with such energy that he often had the happiness of touching their hearts and converting them. Firmly attached to the authority of the Church, all novelties were suspicious in his eyes, and he exerted himself with the utmost vigilance in guarding his flock from their inroad; at the same time he devoted himself indefatigably to their instruction, and would often personally catechise the children and poor peasants. He possessed great facility and persuasive eloquence in the pulpit, an eloquence which was the fruit of the deep convictions of his heart as much as of his natural talents. He had enjoyed the happiness of being well acquainted with St. Francis de Sales, for whose canonisation he afterwards zealously laboured. An ardent admirer of the saint, he seems to have become imbued with a large measure of that sweetness and unction which distinguished the holy Bishop of Geneva. He was also possessed in a very remarkable degree of the virtues of candour and simplicity, and had such a humble mistrust of his own lights, that he was ever ready to submit his judgment to those for whom he entertained a high respect. It would have been well if this exceeding proneness to trust others had not subsequently betrayed him into reposing his confidence on such as were unworthy of it.

As Boudon's merits were already known by reputation to Mgr. de Maupas, he was well aware of the reliance he might place upon his co-operation. Accordingly, before he had taken possession of his new see, he wrote to the Archdeacon begging him to meet him

at Condé—a country seat of the Bishops of Evreux before the Revolution—that he might learn from him the state of the diocese, and consult on the measures which it was desirable to adopt for its benefit. Boudon laid before him a full and particular account of all the abuses and irregularities which prevailed, and freely gave his opinion as to the means which should be employed for their removal. He spoke strongly of the importance of establishing a seminary, but, above all, he insisted on the necessity of reviving the ancient statutes, with the addition of such fresh rules as the circumstances of the times had rendered requisite. Mgr. de Maupas considered that he could not do better than intrust the drawing up of these regulations to him who had suggested their enactment, and Boudon forthwith applied himself with diligence to the task; a diligence which, we know, in his case always implied the most fervent applications for light from on high, that the work he undertook might be God's work rather than his own. On the 29th of May, 1664, the Bishop convened a synod of all the clergy of the diocese, in order to communicate the new statutes to them. Boudon had probably been consulted even as to the form of the letter of convocation; at least his style may be recognised in a copy still extant, where a picture of the Blessed Virgin replaces the arms of the prelate recently installed. This substitution, however, would have been quite in accordance with the dictates of Mgr. de Maupas's own feelings, for he was singularly devout to Mary. The clergy were now constrained to listen to those exhortations from authoritative lips which the Archdeacon had so long poured unheeded into their ears. They were reminded of the personal holiness which their calling imposed upon them, and

enjoined to exhibit it in all its perfection in their exterior ; to wear the ecclesiastical dress at all times ; and to maintain in their whole behaviour—in all their words and actions—that discreet reserve which commands respect. They were forbidden to join in any occupations unworthy of their condition or to be present at profane amusements ; and still more severely were they admonished to abstain from aught which might tend to throw suspicion on the morality of their lives. To these precepts regarding public edification the statutes added others which concerned interior perfection. Priests were exhorted to practise meditation and pious reading, as indispensable for the maintenance of their fervour. Curés were reminded of the numerous duties incumbent on them ; of the obligation of residence, and of devoting all their time to the needs of their flocks ; of the necessity which lay upon them of preaching frequently, catechising assiduously, and administering the sacraments decorously ; of visiting the sick with charity, of warning sinners with zeal combined with gentleness ; and, in particular, much stress was laid on the care and maintenance of churches, the decency and majesty of divine worship, and on everything which appertained to the public service of God. Nothing, in fact, was omitted in these wise regulations which regarded either the numerous duties to the performance of which the priestly office obliges, or the virtues with which those who have entered on it are bound to be adorned. Mgr. de Maupas, after adding the most pressing exhortations to the faithful observance of these rules, declared that, if any priests should be rebellious to his voice, his hands, at least, were pure from their blood, and that he would be guiltless of the loss of their souls. Acting on Boudon's advice, he

also established ecclesiastical conferences throughout the diocese, at which the priests of the neighbourhood should meet from time to time, mutually impart their lights, propose their doubts, and excite each other to the fulfilment of their duties.

The more the new bishop became acquainted with the great need of reform which existed in his diocese, and with the difficulties which beset its accomplishment, the more he learned to appreciate the invaluable co-operator with whom the goodness of God had provided him; nay, he even regarded Boudon in the light of a tutelary angel charged with the office of announcing to him the divine will, and would undertake or conclude nothing without his advice, manifesting, moreover, towards him a deference which was often painful to his humility. In short, so high was the esteem he entertained for his archdeacon, and so perfect the confidence he reposed in him, that no one could have supposed that it would be possible ever to shake or undermine them. But Mgr. de Maupas had not only conceived the most exalted opinion of Boudon's merits, he also felt a warm personal affection for him. He bade him consider his table as his own, and sought his society on all occasions, enjoying nothing so much as to converse with him concerning heavenly things; and often, at the close of the evening, he would engage his guest to address a pious exhortation to his servants and household.

Of all the different charges with which Boudon was invested at that time, the direction of the Carmelite nuns at Pont Audemer was, perhaps, the sweetest and the most consoling to him. The convent was not situated within the diocese of Evreux, but belonged at the period in question to that of Lisieux. With the

permission of their bishop, the religious begged Mgr. de Maupas to permit his archdeacon to act as their superior, a request to which he willingly assented. This Order was especially dear to Boudon, who used to style the Carmelites the Seraphim of the earth, quoting the opinion of M. Gallelant* in support of his own, that they were destined to fill the vacant thrones of the apostate angels of that hierarchy. His love for the doctrine of their blessed reformers, St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, is manifested in his writings, and particularly in his admirable work on prayer,† where he continually quotes or refers to them as authorities. But the greater his admiration for the Carmelite Order, the more intense was his desire to see its members living up to their high vocation. Hence the zeal with which he laboured to maintain in the community of Pont Audemer the strictest fidelity to rule, without which the spirit of an Order, which constitutes its peculiar life, is sure to evaporate. To restore that spirit by a return to primitive observance was the great aim of St. Teresa, and, as the slightest neglect in this matter tends to relaxation, Boudon regarded nothing as unimportant, and enjoined the closest attention to the smallest details.

While thus devoting all his energies to maintaining a spirit of fervour among the nuns, and keeping a strict watch lest any declension from the austere life prescribed by their constitutions should be tolerated, there was nothing he dwelt upon more urgently than the

* A celebrated doctor of the Sorbonne, who died in the odour of sanctity.

† *Le Règne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale*. He also wrote a little work entitled "*La Vive Flamme d'Amour*," specially devoted to the honour of St. John of the Cross and the exhibition of his virtues.

observance of the vow of poverty. In this he was only following their great mistress, St. Teresa, who was persuaded that all the order and well-being of a community depended on this point. The spirit of appropriation in one who had sworn to God at the foot of His altar that she despoiled herself of all to give herself to Him, inspired him with horror, albeit it might be exhibited in very inconsiderable matters—such as the possession of a book, a rosary, a holy picture—esteeming that this spirit was fostered by attachment to any object whatsoever, even where that attachment seemed to spring from a sentiment of piety. There is no contradiction, although on the surface there might seem to be so, between the extreme caution here manifested and the encouragement given to the faithful in secular life to cherish and keep by them such devotional objects; for, if lay persons should sometimes attach themselves to these things in a manner which in a nun might be esteemed excessive, it must be remembered that, by drawing their hearts to God, to whom they are referred, these objects serve to combat the counter-attraction of the world's baubles, which in their case constitutes the special danger to which they are exposed. The love of a possession, therefore, which has purely a spiritual value, but which might nevertheless become a hindrance to one in a higher state, is an actual help in a lower; a rule which admits of much wider application.

Another of the special objects of his vigilant superintendence was the admission of fresh members. Even as he abhorred that greatest of injustices, the turning away of a soul which God had chosen for Himself, so also was he moved to indignation by the selfish avarice of some parents who, to secure a sufficient establishment for their other children, would foist off one on the

cloister without profit to the soul thus sacrificed to their ambition, but probably much the reverse, and to the great detriment of religion. He desired, therefore, that the utmost care should be taken to set before parents the terrible responsibility they incurred by constraining their children to enter a state to which God was not calling them. Valuing as he did the interior riches of grace infinitely above the goods of this world, he would have the community pay no regard, in the admission of a novice, either to her birth or to her fortune. He even held that the high notions and self-indulgent spirit which such as had possessed these advantages would often import into a house, made it pay very dearly for the dowry it had received and the credit it had acquired. He dreaded even those natural gifts of the mind which feed self-complacency and war against humility and a spirit of submission, which, if needful for all Christians, are indispensable in a good religious; following in this, as in all else, the great St. Teresa's principles, who would willingly, she averred, send away a girl puffed up with her spiritual knowledge and familiarity with the Scriptures, to receive in her place a poor lay-sister whose humble and simple piety had taught her only to obey, and to speak with God in the simplicity of her heart. It was in order to maintain as much as possible this spirit of simplicity and submission, that he kept a strict guard over the books which were read by the nuns, forbidding all useless ones, and particularly any treating of controverted points, which were extremely common at that time. It is sufficient to recall to mind the havoc which spiritual pride made amongst the inmates of Port Royal, in order to feel how fully justified he was in using the most rigid precautions in this matter.

Boudon was not to enjoy very long the protection and support of Mgr. de Maupas's presence in the work of reforming the diocese, for that prelate was deputed by the clergy of France to act on their behalf at Rome, where he had been previously employed on the same business, viz., the promotion of the canonisation of St. Francis de Sales. Placing unbounded confidence in the zeal and prudence of his archdeacon, whose lights, indeed, he always preferred to his own, he appointed him his Vicar-General and armed him with all the fulness of his own authority, giving strict injunctions that the same obedience should be rendered to all that he should command as if it had emanated from himself. A heavy burden was now laid upon Boudon. We have seen what was the animus of a large portion of the clergy, and how during the last ten years he had vainly exhausted all the means which his charity could suggest to bring them to a better state of mind. He now found himself invested with the power which previously he had not possessed, of compelling them to submit to the rules of ecclesiastical discipline, and, in case of their refusal, of using those severe measures which the Church adopts when it is needful to vindicate outraged morality and remove scandal from amongst her ministers. The arduous work of reform was, indeed, already commenced, but the absence of the Bishop left Boudon to finish it alone. He did not shrink from the task, but in so doing he completed the alienation of those hardened men who had long been wearied and irritated by his pious remonstrances. Besides these implacable enemies, who were prepared to combine in any scheme which might bring discredit on the Archdeacon, and so lead to his removal, a large number of Curés in the diocese,

less vicious and malevolent, it is true, but worldly and lax in their conduct, were profoundly discontented at being required, under pain of ecclesiastical censure, to give up their easy-going ways and slothful manner of life.

But worldliness and neglect of the duties of their high calling, so prevalent amongst the clergy, were not the sole evils with which Boudon had to contend. He had to watch over the faith of both people and priests, menaced as it was at that time by the subtle and pestilent heresy of Jansenism, the evil influences of which extended far beyond the circle of those who were its avowed champions, and alarmed all truly enlightened men. Other heretics, when the Church has passed sentence upon their errors, have, generally speaking, been at once expelled and cast forth, and were thus no longer able to infect the fold with their deadly plague, but it was the peculiarity of the Jansenists to cling pertinaciously to the Church which condemned them, and by every trick of dishonest evasion elude the force of its reiterated censures. Rome now interposed its authority for the fifth time, and Alexander VII. was preparing a Bull containing a formulary similar to that which the party had contested the right of the majority of the French bishops to impose on the clergy, but it was easy to foresee what would be the fate of this pronouncement. The eagerness with which the sect had welcomed the device invented by their leader, Arnould, who had put forth the opinion that it was allowable to give external adhesion to a decree of the Holy See without accepting it *ex animo*, on the ground that all that was required was respectful silence, held out little hope of its accomplishing the desired object, or of its succeeding in winnowing the chaff from the grain.

Not that the Jansenists pretended to dispute the authority of the Holy See in questions of doctrine, but they made the now notorious distinction between infallibility in matters of dogma and infallibility in matters of fact, by the help of which subterfuge they contrived to override every difficulty and escape from every dilemma. The neighbourhood of Port Royal, and the facility of communication with its inmates, who, in conjunction with the so-called Solitaries—who had planted themselves around it—exerted all the superiority of their cultivated intellects to recommend and lend a charm to that most unattractive system of disguised Calvinism, of which they were the ardent advocates, rendered the diocese of Evreux peculiarly accessible to its evil influences. Even after the nuns had been removed, the Solitaries remained, and, with them, the propaganda of Jansenistic errors, which, indeed, were spreading there with alarming rapidity, some of the clergy themselves not having been preserved from its taint.

Hateful as was all heresy in Boudon's eyes, there were certain features in Jansenism which must have rendered it peculiarly abhorrent to him. Its systematic conspiracy against Rome, while feigning entire submission to its decrees, its rebellion against the whole mind and discipline of the living Church, while professing the greatest zeal for the restoration of primitive observance, its endeavour, under pretence of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, to withhold men from receiving the Bread of Life, and, under a like pretence of guarding respect for the Son, its discouragement by every possible means of devotion to His Blessed Mother, branding it either as mere sentiment or as hurtful excess, were so many titles to the detestation of all who truly loved Jesus and Mary. "It was not,

indeed, to be supposed," as F. Dalgairns observes, when treating of the spirit of Jansenism, "that the love of Mary could long survive the loss of affection for her Son; all that was tender, loving, and beautiful in the Christian faith perished" under the blighting influence of "this most repulsive of heresies; its fatalist doctrines, its stern and arrogant spirit, its unmercifulness to sinning and perishing souls—all was unchristian and unlovely about it; all withered under its touch; hagiology, ecclesiastical history, spiritual reading, and devotion."* If Boudon was so prolific a writer, we are, perhaps, in a great measure indebted for it to the ravages which this pestilential spirit was making in his days; and, in particular, we owe those works the object of which is to promote love and devotion to the Blessed Mother of God and to exalt her privileges, not only to his own ardent affection for her, but to the painful conviction he entertained that there was a strong tendency abroad to depreciate the grandeur of her position in the scheme of grace, and to restrict the homage paid to her by her children within the narrowest limits. There is much in his writings to confirm this view, and to show that he attributed the perverted state of men's minds on these points to the subtle workings of Jansenism. Of all the schisms and heresies which had afflicted the Church for the last two centuries, Boudon declared that he knew none more dangerous, not even Protestantism; because it disguised itself under a more specious form, so as to surprise the good faith and mislead the judgment even of good men. Mgr. de Maupas was as declared an enemy of the new sect as was his archdeacon, so that, no doubt, he had empowered him to use every means for its repression. One

* *Devotion to the Heart of Jesus*, pp. 29-31.

of the measures which Boudon adopted was to prohibit, under pain of censure, the reading of suspected books bearing on the controverted subjects ; for it was through their literature that the Jansenist party chiefly disseminated their errors. Another was to break up the secret assemblies which were held in different parts of the diocese. Besides which, he exerted himself by means of his letters, his sermons, and his exhortations, to expose the falseness of the new doctrine, and to point out the monstrous consequences which flowed from it.

It can be readily conceived that, although Boudon was legitimately invested with the authority which he thus stringently exercised, and although he did no more than his bishop enjoined him, in his capacity of Vicar-General, to do, the opposition excited was much greater than would have resulted from the immediate action of his superior. In the latter case, the discontented would have known that there was no appeal ; but in the case of his delegate, they hoped that means might be found for getting rid of his control and revenging themselves for a restraint which they felt to be most galling. He might be provoked by vexatious resistance into some act which could be represented as unjust, unreasonable, or violent, or, at least, as exceeding the limits of his authority. A malicious scrutiny was also brought to bear on the minutest circumstances of his life, past and present, to see if capital might not be made out of something for traducing him. His steps being thus dogged with persevering malevolence, it could not be but that his friends should become cognisant of the conspiracy formed against him. They warned him of an approaching storm, nor did he doubt the correctness of their information ; moreover, he foresaw that when-

ever it should burst upon his head he would have to stand well-nigh alone. Until his installation at Evreux, Boudon had made only friends, and, had his heart been less exclusively filled with God alone, had he nourished any desire, however legitimate and excusable, to seek some support in his new position from the friendship of those who surrounded him, he would have experienced a woeful disappointment. Many even of the most respectable among the clergy had from the outset stood aloof from the Archdeacon, and demeaned themselves with coldness and indifference towards him. He had never met with cordial sympathy or co-operation from the body generally, but their estrangement was increased in a manifold degree by the marks of confidence and attachment now lavished upon him by the new bishop. The unlimited powers confided to him and the dignity with which he was invested were regarded by not a few as a sort of reflection upon themselves, who were thus, as they considered, undervalued and passed by ; a neglect which they felt to be the less deserved in proportion as they happened to be conscious of an irreproachable character and a certain zeal for the interests of religion. Wounded self-love and jealousy are sure to bear fruit in the shape of prejudice ; and hence there existed in the minds of these men a decided prejudice against their archdeacon. While giving him credit, as yet, for upright intentions, they were strongly disposed to question the soundness of his judgment and the discretion of his zeal, and were consequently ready to listen to depreciating comments and complaints on the part of the disaffected. The existence of this spirit amongst the best portion of the clergy naturally favoured the views of the malevolent, for it deprived Boudon of that protection which he would have enjoyed had his ecclesiastical brethren

rallied cordially round him and accorded him the consideration and respect which were his due. Full scope was thus allowed to the malicious machinations of his enemies, whose calumnies were finally to be accepted and believed by the great body of the clergy, including those respectable members of whom we have been speaking.

Boudon was not one to be turned from his purpose by unreasonable and vexatious opposition; he could even take a holy joy in such contradictions, believing them to be the prelude of those heavy crosses which he regarded as assured marks of predestination, and of a high predestination. Nevertheless, he did not think it well to go in search of them. Their value proceeded from the love of the Giver, and it was not for him to forestall the ways of Divine Providence. Accordingly, he thought it his duty to write to Mgr. de Maupas, whom he was aware his enemies were adroitly striving to prejudice against him. Yet his letter was not couched in the form of a justification of his own conduct; he contented himself with simply stating, with all frankness and simplicity, what he had done. He then begged the Bishop to permit him to resign his office of Vicar-General, and appoint in his place some one better fitted to administer the diocese during his absence, if he considered that the spirit of opposition excited against him was likely to be injurious to the interests of religion. Moreover, while expressing his own perfect submission to whatever decision Mgr. de Maupas might adopt, he allowed it to appear that he was persuaded that sooner or later he must be the victim of the conspiracy formed against him, and that an order to retire would personally cause him much satisfaction. Mgr. de Maupas's reply is unfortunately lost, but we have the sure testimony of M. Bosguérard,

who saw it, to the entire confidence and warm affection manifested by the Bishop to his Vicar-General, whom he encouraged to continue to act in his name with the same firmness and wisdom as he had hitherto done, assuring him that he would always support him with the full weight of his authority.

It was in the early days of February, 1665, that Boudon, while in the act of preaching at Neubourg, a country parish of the diocese, was seized with that illness which was to have such extraordinary and unforeseen consequences. In the midst of his discourse he was attacked by a violent pain, which obliged him to descend from the pulpit. M^{me}. de Fourneaux, a lady of known worth and respectability, and a widow of mature age, who had long been under Boudon's direction, had a château in the vicinity. She was amongst his hearers on this occasion, and insisted on having him conveyed to her residence. Neubourg, indeed, which was chiefly inhabited by poor agriculturists, did not offer any house suitable for the accommodation of a person in his condition, so that it seemed the natural and proper course to take; nor did the sufferer object to the arrangement. The malady made such rapid and alarming progress during the next three days, that the physicians despaired of his recovery, and advised the administration of the Last Sacraments. Boudon's calmness, as we may well imagine, was in no way disturbed by the sentence of death thus announced to him. He begged that the Vicaire of Neubourg might be sent for, that he might make his general confession, and was sleeping quietly an hour before that ecclesiastic arrived. On awaking, he said with a smile, "I am a poor creature to fall asleep when I have to die to-day." He had prepared himself, how-

ever, with much fervour for his confession, and his penitence could not have been deeper had his conscience been burdened with the blackest crimes. Yet we have the testimony of the priest who heard it, given in confidence to M. Bosguérard, that the faults of which he accused himself did not furnish sufficient matter for absolution. In the evening the Holy Viaticum was brought to him, which he received with a most edifying devotion, and, believing himself to be at the point of death, he resigned his archdeaconry to one whom he esteemed the most worthy member of the Chapter, the Abbé Duvaucel, Grand-Vicaire of Evreux, that he might turn all his thoughts to eternity.

The news of his dangerous condition having meanwhile travelled to Evreux, the liveliest alarm was excited amongst those pious souls who owned him as their director. They united together to do holy violence to Heaven by their prayers, and obtain that a life so precious to all, so invaluable to themselves, might be prolonged. They specially invoked St. Gaudentius, for whom they knew that Boudon had a great devotion, and the clergy of the cathedral deputed some of their number to bear to the dying man the precious relic of their great bishop. Boudon received it with the deepest veneration, and, full of confidence in his intercession, made a vow, if he recovered his health, to visit the tomb of the saint at Coutances. He then begged to receive Extreme Unction, and desired to have ashes spread on the floor of his room that he might be laid upon them. To this act of humility he joined that of requesting the priest to interrogate him on the chief articles of the faith, as if he were catechising a child, putting the questions in such form that he might answer simply yes or no, as the state to which

he was reduced incapacitated him for more. His extreme weakness is proved by this circumstance, which makes the sequel bear the appearance of something little short of miraculous. No sooner was the rite concluded than, urged by an interior movement of grace, Boudon addressed those around him on the importance of salvation, speaking with such warmth and energy, for more than an hour, that the physician, fearing that the effort would extinguish his small remaining spark of life, at last besought him to cease. He obeyed at once, but the doctor's fears were groundless, as he himself perceived to his great amazement, when, on feeling his patient's pulse, he found it quite tranquil and regular. All apprehensions had vanished, and Boudon was pronounced to be out of danger.

He was left, however, in a state of extreme weakness, and the delicacy of his constitution rendered his recovery slow. Under these circumstances, he consented to prolong his stay at M^{me}. de Fourneaux's house until Easter, profiting thereby, according to the advice of the physicians, to take the mineral waters at the village of Vieux Conches in the immediate neighbourhood. As soon, however, as his strength permitted the exertion, he hastened to fulfil his vow and repair to the tomb of St. Gaudentius * to return thanks for his cure. This

* This great bishop, after governing the Church of Evreux, which owed its reconstitution to him, faith having become nearly extinguished by persecution in those parts, retired to a desolate spot on the sea-coast in the diocese of Coutances. Here some pious anchorets lived under his rule, and here, after his death at the close of the fifth century, he was buried. But in those troublous times the place of his interment was providentially forgotten, which thus saved it from desecration by the pagan northmen. It was rediscovered in 1131, and the numerous miracles worked at it, especially towards the middle of the seventeenth century, determined Eustache Le Clerc de Lesseville, Bishop of Coutances,

tomb, which had recently been illustrated by miracles, was near Grandville, a little seaport in the diocese of Coutances, about fifteen miles from Mont St. Michel. Boudon's devotion to all the local saints of the diocese is worthy of note, and the more so because such devotion would seem to be very common amongst persons of eminent holiness. The saints of all regions belong, it is true, to the whole Church, and we, on our part, have our special attractions amongst them—spiritual preferences, as we may call them—of which we cannot always state the cause; but, besides all this, the saints of our own country and, still more, of our immediate neighbourhood, would seem to have an exceptional claim on our veneration, and to be bound in a very peculiar manner to help us. Their removal from earth has not broken those natural ties of affection which, in them, grace had exalted and spiritualised, and we may well believe that they retain in the land of their bliss and “amidst the innumerable joys of Heaven a particular charity for the salvation of their country.”* Eyes enjoying great spiritual light have had a strong perception of this truth, as assuredly Boudon's had, to which his works bear constant evidence.

Nor were his great patrons ungrateful. An undated letter to M^{me}. de Rouves,—which, however, must be referred to this period, since it was written after his cure through the intercession of St. Gaudentius, and apparently before the storm of calumny which was so to have the body translated, which was done in 1664 with much pomp and an immense concourse of people. The bones of the saint were found to be as fresh after twelve centuries as if only recently separated from the flesh, and exhaled the sweetest odour, which a Calvinist noble, who was present, confessed to be a manifest miracle.

* *Litany of Intercession for England.*

soon to assail him had yet burst on his head,—speaks of a communication which he received on the festival of the saint, and for which he believed himself to be indebted to him. He beheld in a dream a cross shrouded in clouds, which gradually unveiled itself, while at the same time he saw others in the air of various dimensions. The dream had evidently something remarkable about it, for he adds, “I know not what this means, but on one of the festivals of St. Taurinus”—another saint of the diocese, to whom Boudon had also a deep devotion, and of whom he wrote a short life—“I seemed to see a cross of such great length that our miserable nature was frightened at it; so that crosses present themselves on all the festival days of the holy Bishops of Evreux.” Crosses were esteemed the greatest of favours by Boudon, although he alludes to a sensible repugnance on the part of his inferior nature. He was to have his heart’s desire in full. Notwithstanding his poverty, Boudon on his visit to the sanctuary of St. Gaudentius promised to give a silver reliquary to contain the precious relic possessed by the Cathedral of Evreux, which had been applied to him when he was at the gates of death; a vow which he subsequently fulfilled. From the hermitage of St. Gaudentius he went to Mont Saint-Michel to honour the Prince of the heavenly host and all the angelic hierarchies. Here his soul was flooded with divine consolations, but here also fresh light warned him of the approaching combat, for which he prepared himself with perfect submission and a dauntless spirit of endurance.

At the time when the violence of his disorder seemed to exclude all hope of life, Boudon, as already observed, had thought it his duty to resign his charge of arch-

deacon in favour of the ecclesiastic whom he believed most fitted for the office. On his recovery, therefore, he would have remained a simple unbeneficed priest, a matter of anything but regret to himself, as he evinced by his request to the Bishop of Léon, in whose diocese he was born, to permit him to remain in that condition, dependent for his maintenance, as he said, "on the loving care of Providence." But such was not the will of God. The resignation was informal, as, the *Regale* being still in force at Evreux, the office could not be disposed of without the royal assent. A friend of Boudon's, accordingly, begged the king's confessor to speak to his Majesty in favour of one who had been serving the Church so profitably for many years, and by this means procure the annulling of the resignation and secure his re-appointment. Thus Boudon found himself archdeacon once more, without having taken any step to obtain this favour; a favour, however, which was to bring with it a burden intolerable to one not prepared, like him, for crosses, opprobrium, and rebuke.

CHAPTER X.

BOUDON THE VICTIM OF CALUMNY—BEHAVIOUR OF THE BISHOP.

THE first indication of the coming storm was a seemingly insignificant cloud, which one might have thought the bright sun of Boudon's spotless reputation would have sufficed to dispel as it rose to view. A few foolish women of the class to whom the French world applies

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the name of *dévotés*—a term for which we have no epithet of similar conventional import—indulged in some ill-natured gossip, of which self-love and jealousy were the apparent prompters. These ladies thought well to complain of the prolonged residence which the Archdeacon was making under M^{me}. de Fourneaux's roof, and to hint that that lady's attentions, which they probably envied her the privilege of paying, were indiscreet and excessive. Had Boudon not been beset by so many enemies eagerly on the watch to injure him, this silly talk would have died away with the occasion which provoked it, and no one would have attached the smallest importance to it. He had foes, however, not only among those priests who abhorred the discipline he enforced, but others still more envenomed among such as were tainted with Jansenism. These last, whose animosity had been lately intensified by the knowledge they had acquired, that the Archdeacon had informed Mgr. de Maupas of the secret assemblies they were holding in the diocese, and had received from him stringent injunctions to oppose them with all his authority, were resolved to be rid of him at any cost, and availed themselves of the former class as their ready instrument in the work of vilifying the object of their hatred. They saw at once what use might be made of this feminine scandal, which, instead of meeting with the rebuke it deserved, was taken up, retailed, and amplified. Neither the pure and holy character of the Archdeacon nor the age and hitherto unimpeachable reputation of M^{me}. de Fourneaux could check the circulation of the most absurd and most shameful insinuations and inventions, which, so far from having the slightest ground to support them, were, from their very nature, improbable in the highest degree. By and by, Boudon's enemies ventured into

print, and defamatory pamphlets were put forth with the object of stimulating and feeding public curiosity, in which, as Boudon said in after years, he thought he was accused of every crime in the world save theft.

The first of these vile productions was from the pen of a Curé, who seems to have made himself the organ of those priests whose license Boudon had been compelled to restrain. The accusations were so gross and incoherent, and the language so indecorous, that Bosguérard described the pamphlet as deserving to be burned by the common hangman. This scurrilous paper and others of a like sort were followed by one much more damaging, owing to the high reputation enjoyed by the religious who penned it. His name has been suppressed, from consideration, doubtless, for the Order to which he belonged, for, high as he stood in public estimation at this time, he was, ere many years had elapsed, to disgrace himself flagrantly; God, we may believe, permitting him to suffer this grievous fall in order to bring him, as happily it did, to sentiments both of justice and of penitence. At the period when he took the lead in calumniating Boudon, the apparent austerity of his own conduct gave his testimony much weight, particularly as he had hitherto carefully concealed his prejudices against the Arch-deacon, which were inspired, it would seem, by the Jansenists, whose animosity he served, without ostensibly belonging to their party. His pamphlet, therefore, was regarded as the work of a man actuated by no human passion, but impelled by a painful necessity, which zeal for God's interests imposed upon him. It was drawn up with all the skill calculated to convey this impression, and it produced a great sensation at Evreux, where it was not only eagerly read by those

whose licentious lives rendered them greedy of scandal, but extensively circulated among the public generally ; and even estimable and well-disposed persons, led astray by the reputation of the author and by the varnish of zeal and piety with which he had artfully set off his production, began to give entrance into their minds to distressing doubts.

Yet such doubts were supremely unjust in the case of a priest like Boudon, who for ten years had given to Evreux an example of virtue beyond all praise. In the very matter which formed the subject of the accusation brought against him no one could have carried reserve and precaution further. He was a great enemy to all intimacy or familiarity between directors and their female penitents, as has already been noticed, and most strongly recommended to them the line of conduct which he had laid down for himself towards women, and which shunned both extremes ; for, while, with all gentleness and patience, he bore with their faults, weaknesses, and even scrupulosities, and was careful to avoid giving discouragement, to which he considered them easily disposed, he cut short all superfluous conversation, to which he thought they were also very prone, and rigidly retrenched everything which might serve to feed self-love and vanity. We find him at this very period, when the most odious charges were being brought against him, writing advice of this nature to Bosguérard ; and none of his clergy could have been ignorant of his views on the subject any more than of his own personal practice. But, perhaps, his very perfection and strictness in this respect favoured the malice of his enemies, addressing themselves as they did to many whose own relaxed notions made them impatient of the curb, and who

hailed with delight the prospect of pulling down the reputation of their austere superior and proving that he too paid his tribute to human frailty.

Things had arrived at this pass when Mgr. de Maupas returned from Rome. He was immediately besieged by denunciations of his Vicar-General. The libellous papers containing the aspersions on his moral character were laid before him; the indignation and contempt which his disorderly conduct had universally excited were painted to him in the strongest colours; and all this was urged with a boldness and a hardihood which nothing but the most perfect conviction, grounded on irresistible evidence, could justify. The Bishop was astounded, and, although in the first instance he undoubtedly disbelieved the accusations, the very grossness of which would have rendered them utterly incredible regarding a priest far less holy than he knew Boudon to be, yet he does not seem to have repelled them in that tone of merited indignation which would have discouraged the calumniators from renewing the attack. For discouraged they certainly were not, but plied the prelate incessantly with fresh complaints and fresh charges, artfully veiling their malice under the cloak of zeal for the interests of religion. A distressing anxiety began to weigh upon the mind of the Bishop, who was always acutely sensitive where those interests were concerned, and ever prone to distrust his own judgment. Great as was the confidence he had reposed in the virtue of his archdeacon, it must be remembered, in excuse for these injurious misgivings, that he had known him but a few months, and that he appeared to be placed in the painful alternative, if he would hold him innocent, of believing that an overwhelming number of persons, amongst whom were respected and

respectable names, were leagued in a shameful plot to defame him. The Bishop accordingly remained in a state of pitiable suspense.

It would be doing Mgr. de Maupas injustice, however, to suppose that as yet he yielded credence to the infamous accusations of which one he had so much trusted, loved, and, indeed, revered, had become the object. But he was bewildered, and perhaps the passive attitude of the accused contributed not a little to keep him so. Whether it were that Boudon scarcely foresaw at first the consequences of the storm raised against him, or that his charity could ill conceive the extent to which the malignity of his persecutors would proceed, or—and this last supposition would fully coincide with the idea we are led to form of his character—that he preferred to put away from his thoughts all painful anticipations, conforming himself peacefully, as on all occasions, to the holy will of God, certain it is that he gave himself no active concern to meet or repel the charges brought against him, and even treated them slightly. Under no circumstances, it is true, would he have been the man to come forward with loud protestations of his innocence and eagerly plead his own cause, but there is reason, moreover, to believe, from what remains of his correspondence, that he really thought that the whole matter would die out of itself, and might be left to do so. Writing in answer to the letter of a friend who was deeply distressed at the injurious stories fabricated to his disadvantage, we find him saying that the reports circulated at Evreux were of no manner of consequence, that they were mere worthless gossip, and to trouble oneself about them would be to trouble oneself about nothing at all. At the same time we find him assuring M^{me}. de Monteuil, a religious at

the Abbey of St. Sauveur, that it was not true, as had been asserted, that he was on ill terms with his bishop. Neither, indeed, as yet could it be said with truth that there was any breach between them. Mgr. de Maupas, on the contrary, was greatly desirous to be able to retain for his archdeacon those sentiments of love and esteem with which he had inspired him, and made strenuous efforts to free himself from the painful impression which the violent and reiterated complaints made against him had created and fostered in his mind. Accordingly, he would sometimes send for Boudon and bid him justify himself, in the hopes of removing thereby his own uneasiness and perplexity.

There can be no question but that he would have been very glad if his archdeacon would have made an energetic protest against the injustice done him and couched his defence in strong language. This would have impressed the Bishop, and operated against the effect produced by the vehemence of the accusing party. But Boudon spoke with such humility and moderation that his hearer was *not* impressed, and yet this was strange; for surely no one could give better proof of innocence than by behaving with Christian calmness under such cruel provocation. Any sinner can cry out against the unjust treatment, as he would have it, of which he is the object, in excited and indignant self-justification; such denial, therefore, proves little or nothing. It is saints alone who are never eager in their own cause, and who either remain silent or reply with a supernatural tranquillity, after the pattern of their Divine Master in the presence of His judge and accusers. Mgr. de Maupas ought to have felt this; he ought also to have felt that it was from sentiments of delicacy which were an honour to him that the calum-

niated servant of God passed over or scarcely alluded to certain infamous charges which merited neither credence nor refutation ; for it must be remembered that this particular slander formed but one item in the indictment framed against him. But it was otherwise permitted. None of these things apparently struck the Bishop. So far from it, the imperturbable calmness and unimpassioned tone of the accused left his hearer cold and indifferent ; he could scarcely even keep up sufficient interest to listen to replies elicited by his own questions ; and, while Boudon was giving the desired explanations in his quiet way, Mgr. de Maupas would actually drop off asleep, and by and by awake only to talk of other topics. And yet, in spite of his somnolence in the presence of his Archdeacon, the Bishop's mind was only too painfully awake in regard to the subject, and he made inquiries in all directions in order to arrive, if possible, at some settled conviction. With this view he consulted many persons who were esteemed pious, and in doing so was often unconsciously speaking to those who were strongly prejudiced against Boudon, and the result was only to make matters worse.

There was one individual, however, for whom he sent in order to ascertain precisely what had taken place at the period of Boudon's illness, whose clear and straightforward account ought to have opened Mgr. de Maupas's eyes and removed every reasonable or even possible doubt. This was M^{me}. Lefèvre, a lady who not only was universally respected, but was held in special esteem by the Bishop himself. Calumny had spared her, although she was under Boudon's spiritual direction, and was in close attendance on him during his sojourn at Neubourg. Mgr. de Maupas knew well that

she would not defend him at the expense of conscience, and, with this conviction, begged her to inform him of the exact truth. After protesting in a general way that the charges brought against the Archdeacon were a tissue of calumnies and lies, she replied in detail to all the different heads of accusation. Boudon had prolonged his stay under M^{me}. de Fourneaux's roof only in obedience to the doctors, who had strongly insisted on his doing so. As respected the expense to which he was accused of having put his hostess, whom it was asserted he had quite ruined by his exacting requirements, the fact was, as she assured him, that he had amply reimbursed her.* There is something, indeed, positively ludicrous when we come to think of this particular accusation, and figure to ourselves the ascetic Boudon transformed into a self-indulgent invalid, reclining on his sick couch and feasting on the costly delicacies which he imperatively demanded at the hands of his entertainer. One would have thought that the very idea must have raised an incredulous smile on the face of the Bishop, who had received the Archdeacon too frequently at his table not to be well aware of his abstemious habits. Boudon a *bon-vivant* was almost as extravagant a notion as Boudon a profligate. This

* Collet makes M^{me}. Lefèvre say that Boudon handed over to her 600 livres, which he had received as restitution-money from his late mother's property; but Boudon's mother was still living, so that there must be some inaccuracy here. It will be remembered that Henri was defrauded of his patrimony through the greed of his stepfather and the weak acquiescence of his mother. If any such tardy act of restitution was made as is indicated by Collet, no record remains of it in those letters of Boudon which have been preserved. The account of the interview given in the texts rests on Collet's testimony, and seems in every way probable. For dates and the order of events much reliance can never be placed upon him.

last calumny, the climax of all, was inexpressibly painful to M^{me}. Lefèvre, knowing, as she said, so well the purity of the great Archdeacon's morals; she also hoped she had herself the honour of being sufficiently known to him whom she addressed, not to fall under suspicion in that respect, and yet no one had nursed Boudon more assiduously than she had done during his illness at M^{me}. de Fourneaux's château. There was quite enough, one might have thought, in this statement to satisfy the Bishop's mind, and for the time it did satisfy him, or, at any rate, made a considerable impression upon him, and he was heard to say more than once that, if his Vicar-General had been guilty of anything, it was only of too much zeal for truth and for the maintenance of discipline. That was, in fact, the head and front of his offending; but Mgr. de Maupas was not to persevere in this reasonable conviction.

And here we cannot but notice that, good as were the prelate's intentions, he cannot be held blameless for his conduct in dealing with this affair. If he really believed the Archdeacon guiltless of the gross offence imputed to him, he was bound to exert his authority to silence the clamour raised against him. As Bishop he was well able to do this; at any rate he could certainly have stopped the mouths of his clergy. But if, on the other hand, he doubted Boudon's innocence, then it became his duty, if only for the sake of justice to the accused and in order to give him the opportunity of clearing his character, to institute a formal inquiry into the business, summoning competent witnesses; and these would not have been hard to find. But he did neither the one nor the other. He listened to every one, he allowed every one to have his say unchecked. Repeated from mouth to mouth and circu-

lated in pamphlets, these vile imputations, which had originated with a few malicious individuals, thus became the property of ever-increasing numbers. Men believed them on the faith of their informants, and, repeating confidently what they had heard, were themselves credited in like manner, till at last it appeared that all the world both knew and believed that Boudon was a consummate hypocrite. What all boldly asserted and firmly believed the Bishop got to think must be true, and thus the mischief he had himself allowed to grow and, indeed, had virtually fostered by his irresolute behaviour, swelled into a mountain of appalling evidence which overwhelmed his own better judgment and finally compelled his assent. It may be urged in the Bishop's defence that on his return to his diocese he found the slander commonly believed, even by the clergy, and libellous pamphlets already in circulation ; and this is the most which can be alleged in excuse for his conduct. Still, as it is certain that in the first instance he believed his archdeacon to be maligned, he ought to have done what he could to shield and defend him ; and besides, Boudon, if an accused, was not a convicted man, and had a right, therefore, anyhow to have his reputation protected until he had been found guilty.

Clearly Mgr. de Maupas was not equal to the situation, and, if his failure proceeded from an error of judgment, it was none the less a fault, since he had the means of forming a juster view of his duty. The cause of this fault may probably be found in the weak side of the Bishop's character, his susceptibility to impressions, and a proneness always to prefer the judgment of persons whom he respected to his own. It belonged to his temperament to be inclined to this

species of exaggerated or, rather, spurious, humility; for, although no humility can be excessive as a virtue, there may well be occasions when its exercise in some particular form is ill-judged, and when some other virtue ought to be called into action, a virtue which would, perhaps, be more difficult of exercise than this apparent diffidence of self and deference to others. It was easy to Mgr. de Maupas to be humble concerning his own opinion, but it was difficult to him to bear up against the pressure of good people's adverse opinions, and take a decided course in spite of them. Faults of temperament would seem to be the last which holy persons succeed in entirely eradicating. Perhaps none but saints accomplish this work perfectly, and by saints we mean, generally, such as have wholly mortified the old Adam, who, it is to be feared, are always a limited number—and the reason may be, that defects of temperament are rather dispositions and proclivities than positive faults; dispositions, too, which can, and often do, shelter themselves under very respectable appellations, so that it requires much interior illumination to detect their evil influence when they prompt to a certain line of conduct; and, so far as they are not detected, even good men are liable to be hurtfully affected by them, and to act by their movement rather than by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Persons holding no responsible situations may, indeed, pass through life with defects of this nature only partially subdued, which occasionally betray them into venial sins, of which God makes use to keep them humble, yet without committing any errors very mischievous in their consequence; but it is not so with men in authority, where disastrous results not seldom follow from that warping of the judgment which they are

apt to produce. Of this we seem to have an instance here.

Boudon's enemies, having enjoyed full liberty to traduce him in word and in print, now ventured on a yet bolder step. This was to denounce him openly from the pulpit of the cathedral as a man of scandalous life, and to demand of the Bishop his punishment in the name of outraged religion and of public edification so deeply compromised. A religious employed to preach the Advent and Lent stations at Evreux was persuaded to be the mouthpiece of his accusers. He apparently knew nothing personally of Boudon, and might not be aware that his zeal and firmness had made him numerous enemies amongst a relaxed clergy. Ignorant, therefore, of the circumstances of the case, and finding the Archdeacon an object of general execration, it may be supposed in his excuse—if, indeed, it be an excuse—that he hastily concluded that he had deserved this odium by his disgraceful conduct, and persuaded himself that in accepting the office pressed upon him he was but unmasking a hypocrite and contributing to repair a public scandal. Accordingly, he adjured Mgr. de Maupas to deliver the diocese from a priest whose life was an opprobrium to religion and an offence to morality. Boudon meanwhile, who was seated amongst the clergy opposite, listened with unruffled tranquillity to this cruel attack. In doing so he had to put no force upon himself. The peace of his soul was secured by his deep humility and perfect charity, and, lest any censorious thought should arise to trouble its serenity, he strove to persuade himself that the preacher believed that he was rendering glory to God by his passionate declamation. In this he so fully succeeded, that he dined afterwards in company with his denouncer as

placidly as if nothing had occurred to disturb his mind. "I dined every day with him," he writes to his friend Bosguérard, "in great peace, and without saying anything to him. This touched our prelate," he continues, "who spoke of it to the religious; the latter answered that this was because I had nothing to say in reply. Thereupon the good prelate expressed his desire that I should give him my reasons, for that people had been decrying me to him now for a long time. It was necessary, therefore, that I should state some reasons since he wished me to do so, but I begged him, in the very commencement of my letter, to consider it as private. I did not wish him to make any public use of what I wrote. He expressed himself satisfied, but this did not last, Divine Providence continuing to show Its unbounded mercies to Its poor slave. In this private communication, I was obliged to tell him that many persons had been disedified by the public denunciations of this good father. If the prelate showed this letter, as in fact he did, it was entirely contrary to my intention; but here is my reason for telling you these things; namely, that the prelate obliged me to write to the religious, after the treatment I had received from him, to make him an apology.* Our good Lord, through the favour of His Immaculate Mother, gave me the grace to do this also. Accordingly, I begged his pardon in sufficiently humiliating terms, and in his reply he said that his Order made profession of combating hypocrites. This is the compliment I received from him; and of how much greater value than any possible justification!"

* An apology, apparently, for having written so freely about the disedification which Boudon asserted the preacher had given to the public; a statement, however, which, as we see, he had made to his bishop in the strictest confidence.

Such was the measure by which Boudon estimated the worth of every action. It cut short all comments, it stifled, or, rather, it forestalled, all resentments. What good might his soul derive therefrom? Personally he had no other interest in anything.

Words must fail justly to qualify Mgr. de Maupas's inexplicable behaviour on this occasion. It can only be accounted for by considering how totally he was engrossed with the consideration of his own perplexity and the means of getting out of it. All else, equity, kindness, propriety, seemed for the present to be utterly overlooked. Every day he became more and more a prey to uncertainty and doubt, a state of mind which was adroitly fostered by the religious who wrote that pamphlet against the Archdeacon which had helped so much to injure him, and who had now obtained an undue influence over the Bishop. That prelate was soon to yield to the pressure brought to bear upon him. It weighed much with him that the most influential members of his clergy, men to whom he could not impute motives of animosity against Boudon, had now joined the ranks of his enemies, failing to observe that this arose from the very same causes which were operating upon himself. It was not that any fresh evidence had come to light; on the contrary, it was clear that no evidence whatsoever was from the first produced or produceable; bold and confident assertion had made up for the deficiency—and it is wonderful what can be effected in that way. Another thing which strongly impressed Mgr. de Maupas was the ever-increasing number of persons who firmly believed in the truth of the accusations which had been fabricated; a fact which in his eyes assumed the form of a positive proof; and this consideration, again, told on

the minds of the clergy as it was telling on that of the Bishop. Was it possible, they asked themselves, that calumny could have invented all this? Anyhow, an intolerable state of things had been created which could not be suffered to continue.

Mgr. de Maupas, under these circumstances, came to the conclusion that it was his duty to stifle his remaining sentiments of respect and affection for Boudon, and to summon a meeting of clergy and religious to deliberate on the course to be pursued. Nothing could have better served the purpose of the Archdeacon's enemies. It was they who both inspired and guided every measure, and they were resolved that the whole proceeding should consist in deliberating as to what was to be done, and not in inquiring as to what had been done. Such an inquiry had never taken place, and they knew very well that its result must be the exoneration of the accused; for, had the monstrous charges brought against him been judicially sifted, they would have been found to rest on no evidence whatever. But those charges, having established their credibility by mere dint of reiteration, were accepted as the basis of the contemplated proceedings. The meeting was composed of Boudon's enemies, secret or avowed, and of those who, as has been observed, were swayed by what others said, and carried away by the general conviction that the offences imputed to the Archdeacon could not have been pure inventions, and, above all, could not have been credited to such an extent had they been destitute of all foundation. How little pains were taken to secure justice, and even a decent show of impartiality, may be gathered from the fact that among the clergy whom the Bishop summoned to act as his counsellors was the very religious who

had denounced Boudon from the pulpit during the previous Advent and Lent.

The prevailing feeling which actuated the meeting, that is, of the uninitiated in the plot, was a desire to put an end to a very unpleasant state of affairs. They were accordingly plied with specious arguments as to the necessity of restoring peace and removing a public scandal; arguments which Boudon's enemies knew would also make most impression on the Bishop's mind. All details were to be avoided, and the case made to rest on the general notoriety of his offences; a course by which they would appear to be desirous of sparing the Archdeacon's reputation and inflicting the least possible disgrace upon him. In pursuance of this plan, what they laboured to impress upon the meeting was, that the public good ought to outweigh every other consideration, and that, whatever Boudon's conduct might have been, and in whatever degree it might have been reprehensible, it was imperatively necessary to remove him from his office of Vicar-General; the publicity given to the scandals so deeply affecting his character having deprived him of all that confidence and esteem which was an essential condition for the profitable discharge of its duties. In order to make a certain show of moderation, and, no doubt, to render the proceedings more palatable to Mgr. de Maupas, it was agreed that Boudon should be requested to resign his office. This was also a prudent suggestion as regarded those who had acquiesced rather from weakness than thorough conviction. It seemed to save their consciences. Boudon would not have been condemned by them, and the step would be voluntary on his part.

No doubt was entertained of his acquiescence. He

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had always shown himself far too humble and unambitious to desire to cling to office, and it might be expected that, anticipating severer measures in case of refusal, he would be glad to save himself from further humiliation by a spontaneous act of resignation. But they did not know the man. He was aware that the proposed expedient was adopted merely for the purpose of sparing him the shame of a public deposition, and he believed that he would be making a purer and more pleasing sacrifice to God by accepting the threatened degradation. He accordingly refused to avail himself of the proffered compromise, but thought it his duty to explain his motives in a paper addressed to Mgr. de Maupas ; the loss of which document is much to be regretted, as M. Bosguérard recommends its perusal to any one undertaking to write the Archdeacon's life, as both valuable and edifying. It appears, however, that, after detailing his reasons, he concluded by assuring the prelate that, if he did not acquiesce in the proposal made to him, it was because, by accepting it, he should be acting in a manner unworthy of the honour, as he had always esteemed it, of being despised and set at naught for Jesus Christ ; he had, therefore, resolved to abandon himself to all that the Goodness and Providence of God should permit in his regard. On receipt of this communication the Bishop again summoned the clergy and laid it before them. It was an easy matter for his enemies to misrepresent the motives which had dictated Boudon's refusal, and to attribute his behaviour to a secret and unbecoming pride. The result was such as he had anticipated : it was resolved that his powers as Vicar-General should be revoked. This resolution was adopted on the 9th of November, 1666, just eighteen months after the first propagation of the scan-

dalous reports connected with his stay at M^{me}. de Fourneaux's house. Mgr. de Maupas, however, felt reluctant to proceed to such extremities, and sent for Boudon the next day, with the hope of persuading him to give in his resignation. The Archdeacon observed that such a step on his part would be opposed to truth, since he was really compelled to relinquish his office irrespectively of his own will in the matter. "What would you have me do," he said, "since one must not tell a lie? for it is you who make me resign, not I who ask to do so." From this remark, extracted from a letter of Boudon's to M. Bosguérard,* it is plain that the Bishop had assented to the resolution which the meeting had passed on the previous day. He now explained that it was his intention so to act that no such necessity should appear; for he meant to conceal, not only what had passed in these meetings—it must be remembered that they were not held publicly—but even the object for which they had been convened. In short, he manifested during this interview such a strong desire to conclude the affair with the utmost possible regard to Boudon's feelings, and with the smallest degree of publicity, that the Archdeacon at length yielded to his solicitations, and it was agreed between them that he should give in his resignation.

This arrangement disconcerted the Archdeacon's enemies greatly. They had believed that the object of all their manœuvres had been fully attained, his disgrace as well as his removal from the post of Vicar-General; and now, not only was his removal to be effected without any implied dishonour, but, considering the reluctance manifested by the Bishop to wound or injure him

* Letter CXXX.

in any way, there was every reason to look with dread to the future. Boudon they knew to be incapable of a shadow of resentment; no bar would therefore exist on his side to the preservation of amicable relations between him and the Bishop, who, so far as he was concerned, had reason to be satisfied with the deference shown to his wishes. Access to his person would therefore be easy; the two would continue to meet, old habits would be resumed, and Boudon would insensibly regain all his influence over the vacillating mind of the prelate, who, indeed, they well knew, had never heartily taken part against him. And so all their labour would have been expended in vain: this must not be, and every effort must be employed to bring Mgr. de Maupas to regret what he had done. They went craftily to work, for they thoroughly understood the disposition of him with whom they had to deal, representing to him that he had degraded his authority by lowering himself to solicitations in the case of one whom he had already treated with such exceeding patience and consideration—actually begging him to accept a favour which he had in the first instance disdainfully rejected. They assured him, moreover, that Boudon's reputation was so completely ruined, that he would not succeed in restoring it by an act of kindness which, under the circumstances, was as excessive as it was ill-deserved. They had not missed their aim.

None, perhaps, are so fearful of appearing weak as those who on occasion are deficient in firmness; accordingly, Mgr. de Maupas was once more miserably upset, and, not allowing himself time for reflection, of which the contingency did not seem to admit, this good man was again betrayed into an act of crying injustice. Only a few hours had elapsed since the morning's

interview, when Boudon saw the Bishop's Secretary, Bonneville, arrive, to signify to him the revocation of his office of Vicar-General; the Secretary added that he himself considered it matter of regret that the Archdeacon should not rather have himself resigned. Boudon naturally supposed that there was some mistake or misunderstanding, and, totally unsuspecting of the change that had been brought about, replied that this would be easily done, since the Bishop had communicated to him that morning his own wishes to the same effect. The Secretary accordingly drew up an act of resignation on the spot for Boudon to sign, and took it back to Mgr. de Maupas. The Bishop received it with much irritation, and said to the Secretary that he thought Boudon was a very high and mighty lord, not to be able to endure being dismissed; that when he had been himself Vicar-General at Rheims, his powers had been revoked without any resignation on his part. Nevertheless, in spite of his ill-humour, Mgr. de Maupas was still undecided; possibly, indeed, his ill-humour was entirely the fruit of indecision, for he could hardly have believed what he said of Boudon's high-mightiness; anyhow, he promised to reply within twenty-four hours. But he was surrounded by persons who took care not to allow him the opportunity for quiet reflection, and a return thereby to his own better feelings and sense of justice, and who succeeded in wringing from him his consent to harsher measures. Before the stipulated time had elapsed, Boudon's dismissal had been signified to him with every formality, and it was published on the following day at the bishop's court, and that, too, at an hour when the market was being held, which added greatly to the crowd of the curious who gathered to hear it read.

The enemies of Boudon were elated at their triumph, but the triumphs of hatred and malice are not pleasurable. The world and the flesh can give some short-lived enjoyment, which, though it leaves a sting, has a deceitful sweetness while it lasts ; but hatred, envy, malice, and the like are of the devil, and he who knows no pleasure can give none. As for the Bishop's feelings, they must have been far from enviable. The really happy man that day was Boudon himself. The young Abbé Bosguérard, who went to see him that very evening, was struck by the heavenly expression of his countenance, and, while he was contemplating him with wonder, Boudon said, "Let us bless the Lord, my dear Sir, for what has befallen me to-day ; praise with me His Divine mercy for favouring me with His all-lovable caresses, seeing that I am honoured with some of His humiliations." Now it was, he believed, that, borne down under the weight of opprobrium and injustice, he might hope to begin to render some glory to his Lord ; for it is when our glory sets that God is exalted ; He raises Himself on our nothingness : this was the thought predominating in his mind, which made him say to M. Bosguérard, in a voice penetrated with fervid emotion, *Qui ascendit super occasum : Dominus nomen est illi ;** thus making one of those mystical applications of Sacred Scripture which seldom suggest themselves to any but saintly minds, and which to the worldly, and even to the ordinary Christian, often sound far-fetched and strained.

It was while this painful transaction was in progress that Boudon learned the death of his mother, and we find him begging his friends to offer prayers and communions for her soul. It would be interesting to know

* Psalm lxxvii. 5.

whether there was ever any meeting between mother and son after the latter had been made Archdeacon of Evreux ; but our curiosity on this point can find nothing to satisfy it in what remains to us of Boudon's correspondence.



CHAPTER XI.

CLAUDE PETIT. M^{ME}. DE FOURNEAUX.

IN order not to interrupt the narrative of the proceedings taken against Boudon, we have omitted until now to notice another infamous calumny by which his good name was sullied in popular estimation. It took effect chiefly at a distance, as at Evreux, where particulars were well known, the extravagance of the imputation must have been too obvious for it to obtain extensive credit. The Bishop, however, took some pains to investigate the affair, and the result ought to have been satisfactory to him. In the course of the autumn of 1665, a poor man, as he was supposed to be, of the name of Claude Petit, whose pious and mortified life had won for him the appellation of Brother Claude, died of the consequences of a painful complaint for which he had refused all medical aid. Boudon, who was absent at the time on his visitations, did not assist him at the hour of death, but Brother Claude had latterly frequented his confessional, and had also often served his Mass. Much attention had been attracted to the sufferer, who was well known in the place, by the marvellous resignation with which he bore his torturing disorder ; his death, indeed, was

as holy as his life had been, and the tenderness and fervour with which he received the Last Sacraments deeply moved and edified all present. When, however, the women who prepared the body for interment declared that the supposed Brother Claude had been a disguised female, the public interest was excited to the highest pitch. Not that the discovery shook in the smallest degree the reputation of the deceased; some mystery, it was concluded, lay concealed under conduct so singular, which God would manifest in His own time. Meanwhile, the horror of sin which she displayed, her zeal in particular for purity, and her generous personal efforts to reclaim those who had strayed from the paths of virtue, would have been alone sufficient to guarantee the reality of her own. This, however, is to say but little of her merits, as she seems to have been endowed with very signal graces. In proof of which we need only quote the concluding words of a printed document in the form of a letter which the Curé of Saint-Amand at Rouen addressed to Mgr. de Maupas for his information, and which is dated 17th October, 1665.

Having been applied to by that prelate to institute inquiries, the Curé had succeeded in discovering the girl's confessor, who was a Benedictine, and had drawn up the paper in question from a memoir furnished by that religious, who at the head of it had written, "*Deus et Pater Domini nostri Jesu Christi, qui est benedictus in sæcula, scit quod non mentior.*"* Alluding to the opinion which a learned Jesuit theologian had expressed, that God designed to exalt that soul very highly, the Curé observes that he considered it as fully

* "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not."—2 COR. xi. 31.

justified. "For where," he says, "is anything like mediocrity to be found in the course of this life and in the practice of the virtues it exhibits? What a heavenly ardour for chastity! What flames of holy love, which were visibly manifested one day when she was hearing Mass at Rouen! What patience in extreme suffering! What liberality in the midst of a general scarcity! What confidence in the goodness of God, and the protection of the Blessed Virgin! What fortitude, and what perseverance in the exercise of every virtue to the end of her life!" The people's judgment of this extraordinary girl at the time of her death was entirely conformable to that of her director, and, so far from being regarded as an impostor who had played upon the credulity of the public, she continued to be the object of universal respect. Honourable obsequies were awarded to her, a stone cross was erected over her grave to preserve the memory of the spot, and the name of Brother Claude, as she never ceased to be called, was long held in benediction at Evreux.

The motives which had led to the assumption of this disguise were highly creditable to this poor peasant girl. Marie from her childhood loved virtue, and had a great desire to imitate the saints, of whom some Lives had been read to her—she could not herself read—especially in their love of holy purity, for which she knew that not a few had suffered martyrdom. When old enough for work, she engaged herself as a servant at Rouen. She does not seem to have been remarkable for her beauty, but she had the good looks which youth, an advantageous figure, and, above all, a modesty of countenance and behaviour which never fails to charm, can bestow. Ere long she became the object of criminal advances on the part of her master. To escape this

peril to her virtue, she sought another situation, where, however, she had again the misfortune to attract her master's attentions. Alarmed at meeting everywhere with snares for her innocence, she sought admission among the daughters of St. Clare, but it was God's will that she should be unsuccessful. The aunt of her late mistress, a widow, to whom she now confided a portion of her troubles, compassionated her, and took her into her service; and here she was at peace awhile until the widow's son returned from his studies at Paris. He was an unprincipled youth, and, when he found all his arts, bribes, promises, and threats of no avail to effect his wicked purpose, he had recourse to actual violence, and it was to the special protection of the Blessed Virgin that Marie owed her deliverance from his hands. "O holy Virgin," she exclaimed aloud, "help me! do not permit thy servant to be dishonoured." On the instant the wretched youth was felled to the ground as if struck by lightning, and lay as one deprived of life. The bird had escaped the snare of the fowler. Marie fled, and seemed as if endued with a strength almost miraculous. It was winter, and a thaw which had set in made the roads, always bad, well-nigh impassable. Yet she walked no less than forty-two miles that day, and arrived at Rouen in such a plight that her director scarcely recognised her.

After making her confession, she told him that she had resolved to disguise herself in male attire, in order to avoid the perils which her virtue everywhere encountered. The priest, in the first instance, entirely disapproved of this plan on account of its difficulties and the scandal which possible discovery might involve. But Marie had a complete reply to all his objections,

every one of which she had foreseen : she had already bought a beggar's suit of clothes ; she knew of a village where a poor man would readily find subsistence, and where she could procure work, as there was a very bad road in the neighbourhood which required thorough repair ; a little broth daily would suffice her for food ; and anyhow she looked for everything from the goodness of God, who would inspire charitable persons to befriend her. As for discovery, she feared it not ; never during her lifetime would she be recognised ; God knew the purity of her intentions ; St. Pelagia had acted in like manner, and she desired to imitate the life of penance which that saint had led after her conversion. To all these arguments she added floods of tears, and her director, greatly touched and somewhat staggered, said that he must take advice in so extraordinary an affair, and not decide on his sole responsibility. To this she consented, and he consulted a learned and pious Jesuit, the Père Godefroi, who had been Grand-Penitentiary at Loreto and was now Rector of the Jesuit novitiate at Rouen. After a long conference, in which every circumstance was carefully weighed, the Jesuit said impressively, "My father, this is a great soul ; she must be allowed to do as she wishes ; the purpose she has formed is the reward of heroic virtue ; and assuredly God designs to raise her to high perfection."

A few days afterwards, on issuing from the confessional, the Benedictine observed a very poor and shabby-looking boy entering the church, with a stick in his hand and sabots on his feet, wearing very much the appearance of a pauper convalescent just discharged from the hospital. This youth went up to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, where he remained for a con-

siderable time. On leaving the church, he looked at the Father and smiled. Surprised at this act, the religious turned the matter over in his head, and began to suspect that this might be his penitent. Accordingly, he sent some one after the boy, who overtook and brought him back. Marie—for it was indeed she—had to endure some very sharp reprimands on the part of her confessor for not having awaited his decision ; to which she humbly replied that such had been her intention, but that the fear of meeting with some fresh insult had left her no peace, particularly since her last communion, when she felt herself strongly pressed to execute her purpose without delay. Her director, who, indeed, since his conference with the Jesuit Father had no ground for further opposition, was now fain to accept the matter as an accomplished fact, and encouraged her to persevere. He also furnished her with directions as to her future conduct. Before parting, she begged him to give her a crucifix and a discipline ; she already, it may be observed, wore a rough hair-shirt. He acceded to her request, and added a picture of Our Lady of the Seven Dolours, for whom she had a tender devotion. She also asked him to bestow on her a name, and he desired that she should call herself Claude Petit : Claude, because that was also his own name, and he hoped that it would cause her to remember him in her prayers ; Petit, in order that she might never lose sight of her littleness in the sight of God. Then, giving her his blessing, he committed her to the grace of God, full of confusion, as he said, to see a weak and delicate girl—for notwithstanding her late extraordinary exertions she was not naturally robust—press on ahead of him in the path of virtue ; embracing a hard life of poverty, with all its privations and miseries, rather

than incur the risk of offending God and losing her soul. God, he trusted, would support and aid her, but, fearful lest the labour to which she had condemned herself might exceed her strength, he bade her have recourse to him should she ever fall into want. He also took the precaution, in case of his own death, to confide his secret to one person, selecting that very worthy woman M^{me}. Brébion, with whom the reader is already acquainted, and begging her, should the need arise, to afford a shelter to this poor girl. She who devoted much of her time and means to the reclamation of those who had fallen into evil courses, readily promised not to abandon one who had given such proofs of virtue and of the love of God.

Marie did not escape persecution in the village she had chosen for her place of retreat, though necessarily it was not of the same character. An unhappy girl, who had been betrayed into sin, accused Claude Petit, as we must now call her, of being her seducer. Justification was, of course, easy, but Claude preferred to bear the shame, and, indeed, declared afterwards that this humiliation was a source of such joy as she had never before experienced. Her innocence was at last recognised, apparently through the confession of one of the guilty parties. Claude, however, left the village, in order, perhaps, to avoid the credit which now accrued to her for her patience and humility under injurious accusations, and went to Evreux, where, as we have said, her edifying life caused her to be popularly known as Brother Claude. Several ecclesiastics desired to have so pious a youth in their service, but, fearing, in the event of death, to compromise the reputation of these good priests, she refused all such offers, and, though she sometimes executed commissions for them, as for

many other persons, she always refused to take up her abode with them.

It would seem incredible that the most ingenious malice could have extracted out of such facts as have been just related matter for calumny against the character of the holy Archdeacon; nevertheless, it was extensively circulated and believed throughout France that it was at Boudon's instigation that this girl, whom, it was asserted, he had engaged as his servant, had assumed male attire, and that this had been an infamous contrivance devised for the purpose of cloaking a vicious connection which her death had revealed. Certainly it would have been quite possible for him to be innocently deceived, as those ecclesiastics would have been had she consented to take service with them; but, as it happens, Boudon never during his whole life, not even when borne down with age and infirmities, kept a domestic servant, whether male or female. Indeed, it must have been notorious in Evreux, and throughout the diocese generally, that he lived a life of strict poverty, and was served and waited upon by his own hands alone. His enemies, however, knew how little the public at large is in the habit of testing confident assertions, and how readily anything, however preposterous, would be credited respecting one whose reputation had been already so grievously damaged. This was also a kind of story sure to take with the lower classes and to gratify the gross imaginations of an ignorant populace; and accordingly we are told that ballads were composed on the subject, and sung for the amusement of the rabble on the Pont Neuf at Paris. Boudon's name became a scorn and a by-word, and he might truly have adopted those touching words of the Lamentations, which in their fulness apply

only to the Man of Sorrows : " I am made a derision to all my people, their song all the day long. Thou hast made me as an outcast and refuse in the midst of the people." *

Shame and derision entered so largely into the torment of the Passion that our Lord and Head never alluded prophetically to what He would have to endure without mentioning the mocking and the spitting ; and while He calls His members each in their measure to drink of His chalice and fill up, as St. Paul expresses it, † those things that are wanting of His sufferings, He would seem to have reserved this specially bitter ingredient for those chosen ones who love Him sufficiently to desire it. And there was nothing Boudon so highly valued as contempt and obloquy. Not only do his writings abundantly prove his sentiments in this respect, but his letters testify to the personal enjoyment he took in experiencing them, which, as all know, is a very different matter. We are now but at the beginnings of his trials, and see him, as yet, only entering into that dark cloud which was to swathe him round, not for a week, not for a month, not for twelve months, but for eight long years. Let us for a moment figure to ourselves what it is to lie under some vile and dishonouring imputation even for a day, and that in the eyes only of a few individuals, and those, perhaps, personally unknown to us ; and then think what it must be to be thus disesteemed and despised by every class in society, high and low, rich and poor alike, by friends as well as by enemies and the indifferent, or, if a few friends still refuse to condemn us, to notice that they avoid us for very shame of being seen in our company. Such was to be Boudon's case, and he was not

* Lam. iii. 14, 45.

† Col. i. 24.

merely to be resigned and submissive under this crushing affliction, but to glory and rejoice in it.

The formal revocation of the Archdeacon's office of Vicar-General, but, more than all, the ill-will which the Bishop began to manifest towards him, had necessarily a great effect in spreading and confirming the disrepute into which he had fallen. Hitherto Mgr. de Maupas had seemed to fluctuate in his view of the matter, and, if in the end he yielded his consent to the revocation, it had all the appearance, up to the last moment at least, of being a half-hearted and reluctant consent, rather extorted from a weak deference to the judgment of others than the result of his own decided conviction. But henceforth it was to be quite otherwise. This, perhaps, was to be expected; for no one can permanently remain in a wavering state of mind, the balance must at last incline one way or the other, and, when once a definite opinion has been adopted and expressed, it is the individual's interest, for the sake of his own interior peace, to persuade himself that he has decided rightly. Mgr. de Maupas had now definitely pronounced against Boudon, and good men do not like to think that they have failed in justice.

But there was another cause at work to produce a great change in Mgr. de Maupas's feelings towards Boudon and to create an intense irritation in his mind: this was the behaviour of Mme. de Fourneaux, the lady whose kindness and hospitality had been the innocent occasion of so much mischief. She had been absent from Evreux during all this deplorable business, and returned only to learn the revocation of Boudon's office of Vicar-General and the unworthy calumnies which had been fabricated against their joint reputation. It did not require to be very sensitive to feel keenly,

both for herself and for a priest whom she so greatly honoured, the mortification of such a position; and M^{me}. de Fourneaux was extremely sensitive and excitable. A sense of what was owing to herself, a lady of spotless life and manners, and, still more, of the veneration due to the virtues of her director, amply sufficed to work her up to the highest pitch of indignation. That this slander should have been invented and propagated by enemies, and believed by ignorant and thoughtless people, would have been bad enough, but tolerable by comparison with the actual facts of the case. Here were pious men, dignified ecclesiastics, with the Bishop at their head, all accepting these vile falsehoods and acting on this monstrous belief. But it was against the Bishop especially that her wrath was kindled, and in its first effervescence she wrote off to him letter after letter full of all the bitterness with which her own heart was overflowing.

Not satisfied, however, with having given the prelate to understand what she thought of the injustice and weakness of his late conduct, she engaged by her representations a number of persons to share her resentment and espouse her cause. The assistance of friends on such occasions is more than doubtful; their frequent want of tact and discretion as champions of the wrongs of others is almost sure to give offence, and Mgr. de Maupas was, in fact, more ruffled by the letters which poured in upon him from different quarters than by those of the lady herself, whose anger, he felt, had much to excuse it, whereas the others he considered to be both officious and impertinent. Moreover, it was artfully represented to him, not only that Boudon by his influence as her director could have restrained M^{me}. de Fourneaux's passionate complaints, but that there was

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every reason to believe that he was himself responsible for them ; that all his gentleness and humility at the time of his dismissal was but a clever stratagem, adopted with the view of gaining credit for generosity and enabling him to attack his bishop at greater advantage through the instrumentality of others. This idea, thus insidiously suggested, gained a ready entrance into the already irritated mind of the prelate, and, once accepted, it caused a revulsion in his whole state of feeling towards the Archdeacon. P. Cyprien, a Carmelite, who enjoyed the Bishop's confidence, thought it well to warn Boudon of the harm which M^{me}. de Fourneaux's behaviour was doing him. He told him that Mgr. de Maupas complained of the disrespectful manner in which that lady spoke of him, and of the unbecoming tone of the letters she addressed to him ; all which, he said, had the deplorable effect of alienating the Bishop. This good religious apparently feared that Boudon lent some countenance to M^{me}. de Fourneaux's exertions in his behalf, since he recommends him paternally rather "to suffer a little" than to avail himself of a mode of justification which only made matters worse ; advice which was certainly not needed, and which shows how ignorant the writer was of the character of him to whom he offered it, who, so far from being tempted to justify himself indiscreetly, had no ambition under any circumstances whatsoever to move a finger in his own defence. He had committed himself wholly and entirely to God, and in this self-abandonment he found his stay, his joy, and his peace.

Under the influence of these feelings, he exclaims, in a letter written to his friend Bosguérard, "Oh, no, without reserve, without exception, let us be deserted, abandoned to Divine Providence to be all that It wills and

nothing that It does not will. I would rather die than lean upon any creature ever so little, or on any human means." Happy would it have been could he have succeeded in inspiring M^{me}. de Fourneaux with something of these sentiments, but in this he failed. Although a person of pious feelings and attached to her devout practices, she was quite devoid of the spirit of self-abnegation, was much wedded to her own views, and correspondingly deficient in humility and docility, without which all desires of religious perfection are the merest dream. In a matter where her reputation was at stake, she persuaded herself, moreover, that it was, not only allowable, but her positive duty to give vent to her indignation, and, so far from entering into her director's views on this subject, she blamed his indifference to the calumnies of which they were jointly the object, and thought herself bound to adopt every means at her disposal to obtain public reparation for the wrong that was done them. All the efforts, therefore, which Boudon and a few of his friends made to convince her that human prudence no less than Christian charity required a strict silence on her part, were thrown away; she persisted in her ill-advised measures and foolish declamations, until the Bishop, having lost all patience, thought that he must take some decisive step to break off a connection which was giving, he considered, such manifest scandal. He accordingly forbade Boudon to act any longer as M^{me}. de Fourneaux's confessor, a prohibition which placed him in a very difficult position. He found himself called upon to abandon to itself a soul full of trouble, swayed hither and thither by an ill-regulated imagination, but which still clung to him for guidance. It is true that M^{me}. de Fourneaux's conduct, as we have

seen, was beyond his power substantially to control, but he was able to restrain her occasionally, and had considerable influence with her for good. Given over to her own wayward temper, and to the state of desperation into which this desertion was sure to throw her, there was no saying to what extremities she might be impelled; besides, it seemed cruel to cast her off under her present trials, in which he had been the instrument, however innocently, of involving her.

Boudon, as usual, had recourse to prayer. Where the natural light of reason and of ordinary discretion fail to afford assured guidance, there is a superior light which is never wanting to those who earnestly desire it; and, indeed, Boudon entered upon no course of action whatsoever without seeking the face of God and imploring the gift of counsel. The result of his meditation was a resolution to comply so far with the Bishop's wishes as to engage M^{me}. de Fourneaux to have recourse for her ordinary confessions to a religious, a Capuchin, allowing her still to communicate with him whenever she should feel that the needs of her soul imperatively demanded it. It was desirable, nevertheless, that this should be as seldom as possible, since any communication between them, however rare, might become the occasion of fresh calumnies and even persecution. The sequel proved how true these anticipations were; but his exceeding charity made him prefer this risk to the possibility of a soul, the charge of which he had undertaken, incurring any loss. But M^{me}. de Fourneaux, unhappily, was wanting in that delicacy of mind which ought to have made her appreciate the sacrifice he was making for her sake, and, so far from availing herself of his permission sparingly and with every precaution, she made no

secret of having received it. Indignant at finding that she could not force the prelate to make a sort of public retractation of his injustice towards her director, and that her measures had even had the very opposite effect, she conceived that she had now every right to brave his authority; and, taking her stand on her pure intentions and blameless behaviour, as she always did, she thought it a grand thing to set herself above public opinion and show her supreme contempt for it. Thereupon she declared right and left that Boudon was still her director, and that no one had the power to break the legitimate terms of confidence which subsisted between them.

There are minds which, quite apart from Christian considerations, seem incapable of seeing things in their proper light, or of understanding the meaning of true self-respect. The self-love of persons thus constituted, combined with a shallow intellect, often leads them to imagine that regard to their own dignity renders a certain line of conduct incumbent on them, when it would have been far better maintained by keeping quiet. It is a misfortune to any one to have to deal with these wrong-headed people, and, above all, to have to share, or to seem to share, the responsibility of their extravagances. The patience which Boudon evinced towards this impracticable woman is, perhaps, the most astonishing instance of his heroic exercise of that virtue. Never do we find in his casual mention of her in his letters one unkind expression regarding her; often he even speaks of her in grateful terms, and more than once he eulogises her generosity and fidelity. To do the poor woman justice, she certainly possessed these good qualities. She was both generous and faithful to those she loved, and eminently so to

Boudon, although her devotion to him brought him no good, but the reverse. None knew this better than himself; she was a manufacturer of crosses for him, but we know the value he set on crosses, so he owed her no grudge; he accepted them from the Hand that sent them, and was free to praise the good intentions of the instrument who conveyed them. *M^{me}. de Fourneaux's* indiscreet language on this occasion furnished Boudon's enemies with every facility for completing their work of ruining him in the estimation of *Mgr. de Maupas* and of all who might be still inclined to judge him favourably; and thus they hoped to achieve their object of rendering his position in the diocese so intolerable that he would be driven perforce to resign; for it will be remembered that, although the Bishop could deprive him of the office of Vicar-General, which was an appointment of his own, he had no such power in the case of that of archdeacon, on account of the privilege enjoyed by the Crown.

Unrestrained by the fear of any censure, slander now became bolder and more outrageous every day. It had circulated through every class, and by all Boudon's depravity was accepted as a fact too unquestionable to need any examination. Seeing the universal contempt into which he had fallen, *Mgr. de Maupas* thought himself authorised to restrict him, so far as he was able, in the exercise of his sacerdotal functions, and forbade him to hear confessions or to preach in the diocese; and, that he might leave him in no doubt of the motive which led to this prohibition, he added that of not seeing or communicating with *M^{me}. de Fourneaux* in any manner whatever. Herein he certainly outstepped his authority. As bishop he had the power of interdicting any priest in his diocese from preaching

or hearing confessions, but he had no authority to interfere with the relations of private life. Nevertheless, the few friends who still remained to Boudon in Evreux urged the same course upon him in the way of advice, begging him, as they had for some time been doing, to sacrifice any hope which he might have of benefiting M^{me}. de Fourneaux to regard for his own reputation and for the general edification. Boudon, however, had hitherto felt it best, that is, most conformable to God's will, to act otherwise ; for, as he did not measure actions by the standard of human prudence, so neither did he estimate them by what may be called their apparent utility, that is, the amount of good which it seemed probable they might effect. He left that to God. Here was a soul which Providence had committed to his care, and he did not feel warranted in casting it off without some clear intimation that such was his Lord's will. Perhaps he would have recognised an intimation of this kind, as he certainly did later, in the fruitlessness of his endeavours to bring this soul to see the duty of walking in the paths of Christian obedience and peace, but for the present he was hindered from coming to any resolution, and, indeed, from taking any active step whatsoever, by a severe illness which utterly prostrated him and by the circumstances to which it gave rise.

Naturally of a delicate constitution, and unsparing of himself, as we know, it is wonderful how he bore up so long against accumulated fatigues, privations, and anxieties. At last he sank under their weight, and we once more find him lying on his miserable pallet, as heretofore in his youth at Paris, alone, untended by either physician or nurse, and quite powerless to help himself. In this condition, one might have

supposed that, innocent or guilty, he was, at least, an object of compassion, and that to let him die for want of that ordinary care which would be bestowed even on a condemned criminal in gaol if he fell sick would be viewed as a sin against Christian charity. So it was, however, that no one came near him, and this not from ignorance of his state, but from cowardly and selfish fears. Under the influence of the unnamed enemy who had got possession of his ear, Mgr. de Maupas's animosity against Boudon had daily increased, and he not only exerted himself energetically to estrange others from him, but regarded with marked displeasure those who remained attached to him. The consequence was that many whom Boudon reckoned amongst his best friends, and who, doubtless, even now did not in their hearts feel by any means convinced of his guilt, stood aloof from him, and, unwilling to allege the unworthy motive which actuated them, pleaded conscientious scruples, and actually deliberated whether it was morally allowable to assist him. The question was decided negatively. He must be left to die!

Of all the crowds who heretofore used to press eagerly into his chamber to catch a word from his lips, not one now came forward to give him a helping hand in his utmost need, not one except M^{me}. de Fourneau. This lady had fallen into distressed circumstances, probably through neglect of her affairs and reckless expenditure in her many journeys to and fro, as well as other costly measures which she took for her own justification and that of Boudon. She was now, therefore, so much straitened in means that she could not afford to pay a nurse or servant to go and render to the sick man the assistance of which he stood absolutely in want. If those who raised the cry of scandal at

M^{me}. de Fourneaux visiting Boudon when he lay well-nigh dying, and bestowing on him the care which she had not the means to remunerate in another, would have had the charity to provide a nurse, she would not have gone to him. In a letter to M. Bosguérard, we have Boudon's own testimony to her having said, "Let another come to help him, and I shall do so no longer." The very persons, however, who by their hardness of heart had rendered this step imperative to one of her warm and ardent feelings, now openly declared that it was quite out of the question for them to visit Boudon, as they would be sure to meet this woman there. We must not undervalue the sacrifice which M^{me}. de Fourneaux made on this occasion, for a sacrifice it could not but have been to one who keenly felt the injury which her own reputation had suffered. It was natural, then, that Boudon should be grateful to her, and the feeling of what he owed her must, we conceive, have added to his reluctance to deal severely with her.

Father Faber somewhere remarks that meanness is the most striking characteristic of our fallen nature. Both internal and external observation would tend to confirm the truth of this remark. There is nothing, perhaps, which close and persistent self-examination reveals to us more strongly than our own inexpressible meanness ; and there is nothing which is more palpably evinced on trying occasions in daily life than the miserable pusillanimity of most men when a singular effort of moral courage is required, for of physical courage there is no lack in the old Adam. St. Peter would have fought sword in hand for his Master, and, in fact, had begun to do so until bidden to sheath his weapon, when he could not stand against the sneer of a servant girl. It would seem that this alone can

fully account for the almost total desertion of friends which Boudon experienced, as if he were something too unclean and contemptible to approach. It would, indeed, be a strange mistake to suppose that the whole diocese of Evreux, clergy and laity alike, was possessed of such rigid principles as to think it would be contaminated by the slightest intercourse with a man on whom rested a charge, not to say, an unproved charge, of immorality. A glance at the state of France, ecclesiastical and social, at that time, with its many tolerated abuses and unproved license in high places—and, indeed, at the sketch we have given of this particular diocese—would be sufficient to show that such an idea would be simply ludicrous. The timid counsels of self-love, the torrent of example which it requires a certain boldness and generosity of spirit to withstand—these were the real sources of the neglect which Boudon experienced from his late friends; and any motive which could be put forward was eagerly seized upon to justify their desertion of one whose humiliating and despised position might impart some of its discredit to such as should continue to associate with him. Add to this, the unpleasant truth that, when people are what is called run down, few will be found to take their part; there even comes to be a secret distaste entertained for them; and, just as the hard-hearted amongst the rich positively dislike poverty and its accompaniments, and wish to shovel it out of sight, so the selfish herd, who are infinitely more numerous than the positively hard-hearted, have a certain dislike to such as are impoverished and ruined in reputation; whether the disgrace incurred be deserved or not, the individual who is the object of it is objectionable in their eyes, they would rather keep him at arm's length.

Here is what we may regard as Boudon's account of the matter, since it is found in a work written during the period of his persecution. If not precisely the same view, it is, at least, not out of harmony with the foregoing remarks. "Crucified souls," he writes, "are not pleasing. True it is, there are still some persons who have a respect for them, who assist and stand by them so long as they see a few others take their part. The hostility of the wicked does not weigh much against them, so long as they have the approbation of the good. The opposition even of a few devout people does not prevent their being well regarded, provided there are others of the same class who hold them in esteem. But when every one withdraws from them, both the good and the bad, then these retire with the rest; so true it is that there are few who simply look to God alone. Yes, 'God alone,' say they; but it is only with the mouth; in practice they must have the creature along with Him. They would be ashamed to remain with God alone; they would feel it to be a humiliation and a disgrace openly to take part with a crucified soul, whom all the world despises. Thus this grace is very rare, and is seldom to be found even amongst those who otherwise are far advanced in the ways of God. This grace implies a perfect renunciation of self, entire disengagement; for often the friends of these crucified souls are themselves crucified, and have a share in their sufferings. It demands a magnanimous courage and a Christian generosity; for there is nothing more generous than the Christian spirit. This is why it is an intolerable error to wish to cover the timidity and cowardice of nature under false pretexts of virtue; seeing that virtue is never cowardly when it is true."

How much generosity is required to give an open

and unfaltering support to a friend persecuted, despised, and forsaken by all the world, and how rare such a virtue is, as Boudon indicates, even amongst the good—a thing which we might well be inclined to doubt till it were subjected to the test—we may gather from the fact that even the Abbé Bosguérard, that young disciple of Boudon who was so warmly attached to him as to sacrifice for his sake the favour of the Bishop of Evreux, could not resist a sensation of shame which crept over him one day when accompanying Boudon on a pilgrimage to the Chapel of St. Michel. The idea that this friend of his, whom he nevertheless so sincerely revered, passed for being as corrupted in morals as he was hypocritical in his demeanour—that there was perhaps not a single individual whom they met in the streets who did not believe that such was the case, and who did not associate them both in the same contempt—took such strong possession of his mind that, as he candidly confessed, he could not describe the confusion he underwent. Miserable at his own weakness, which made him desire to get out of everybody's sight, he would fain have concealed the embarrassment under which he laboured from him who was the occasion of it. He subsequently made courageous amends for this movement of humiliated pride, taking great shame to himself for having entertained this contemptible feeling even for a moment; but the very fact that so fast a friend should have been overtaken by so violent a temptation, may serve, at least, to explain, and in some slight measure to palliate, the desertion of those whose friendship was less firm, and whose self-love was more deeply rooted.

CHAPTER XII.

COMPLETE ESTRANGEMENT OF THE BISHOP—BOUDON'S
REFUSAL TO RESIGN THE ARCHDEACONRY—M^{MR.} DE
FOURNEAUX'S INDISCRETIONS AND FINAL ALIENA-
TION OF MIND.

THE contempt and neglect into which the holy Archdeacon had fallen at this time would appear almost incredible if we had not the most convincing testimony both to its degree and to its universality. What were his own views with regard to the abandonment by creatures both at this period and during the whole of his life, may be gathered from abundant passages in his letters, where we find him often declaring that light is given him to discern therein the greatest good which could have befallen him. The dealings of God and His highest truths are, he says, little understood by means of acquired light; it is an infused light which manifests them with admirable clearness; and this infused light is ordinarily given to simple souls, or to such as have been well humbled and mortified. It will be noted how completely all such occurrences were looked upon by Boudon solely with an eye to God and in their character of graces. As regarded the persons themselves who were the instruments of his mortification, he passed no more moral judgment upon their acts than if they had been a number of insects sent to tease and sting him; add to which, that the process called forth none of that fuming and fretting

with which such inflictions are usually borne. He thought it good for him; his Divine Physician prescribed this treatment, and he was thankful.

Here is an instance in point. The circumstance, however, occurred many years later, after he had begun to suffer from those painful and distressing infirmities which formed the cross of his declining years. He is writing to his kind friend, M. Thomas, with whom he is always very confidential, and speaking of his return journey to Evreux on some occasion. "I was very ill the first day," he says, "and was obliged to ask for a private room, and retire without supper. The coach was full of persons who knew me, but they behaved as if they had no acquaintance with me; which did not surprise me. If they had been people to whom I was unknown, they would have taken some care of me in my suffering state, as I have experienced during other journeys." Making no comment whatever on this piece of unkindness, of which he was perfectly cognisant, he proceeds to assign the cause, that is, the supernatural cause. "This is because Divine Providence desires to have me in Its exclusive keeping, and, if ever It makes use of creatures, it is only when Its own action is evident therein. It does not lead me by ordinary human means, but all is under the maternal protection of my good Mistress." It is, indeed, very difficult to assign any obvious natural cause for the behaviour of these people at a period when Boudon's persecution had long ceased and his innocence had been established, but to this subject we shall hereafter recur. Boudon had so thoroughly realised the Beatitudes of mourning, and of suffering unjustly, that the greatness of his trials in this respect was even matter of frequent humiliation to him. As a modest person is confounded

at receiving what he considers too marked a distinction for such as him, so Boudon abased himself before God at the thought of having been thus so greatly favoured. "O my Lord," he would exclaim, "how have I deserved that Thou shouldest treat me as one of Thy dear favourites? Why dost Thou give me poverty, contempt, pain? Whence this abandonment, interior and exterior, which is the chosen portion of Thine elect children?"

The Carmelites of Pont Audemer, in whose direction he took so peculiar an interest, added to the afflictions which weighed so heavily on him at this time by withdrawing themselves from his authority; but it does not appear that belief in the calumnies of which he was the object had any share in this decision. The fact was that the zeal with which he had laboured to bring them back to the practice of that angelic perfection which distinguished the first daughters of St. Teresa, had seemed excessive to the greater number. They could not make up their minds to submit to that rigid despoilment and renunciation of earthly support to the observance of which their great foundress attached the prosperity of the Order; and, wearied with the persistent opposition which Boudon made to the erection of a building which he deemed would be not in conformity with the spirit of holy poverty, they seized the opportunity of the disgrace into which he had fallen to exchange him for a more accommodating superior.

It was, however, from the communities of women, for the edification of which he had so strenuously laboured, that he received the most touching expressions of sympathy and devotion. Never was he welcomed with more affectionate reverence in these humble retreats than when the world without was saturating him with

obloquy and contempt. The Ursulines of Evreux formed, for a very short time, a solitary exception, having been misled by the representations of his enemies. "How happy should we be," writes the Mère Mechtilde, "if your persecutions should lead you to the poor convent of Benedictines to become their confessor!" From M^{me}. de Créqui also, the Abbess of Neubourg, he received assurances that she and her community would never cease to entertain for him the most sincere feelings of respect and attachment. Generally speaking, Boudon's early friends, who in the Congregation in which they were associated had been led on in the ways of perfection by his counsels and example, gave him in the time of his trials unvarying marks of their love and devotion. Amongst these were M. Fermandel, now Director of the Seminary of Foreign Missions, and M. Thiersault, recently appointed chaplain to the Queen. M. de la Pinsonnière, who had gone upon the Foreign Missions, wrote to him frequently to testify the sympathy he felt for him in his trials and his admiration of the virtues which they called into exercise. The Bishop of Petrea, Mgr. de Laval, that staunch friend and patron, who in distant Canada had heard of the calumnies which assailed him, and who knew the spirit of the man so well, was able to rejoice with him that God had given him a soul capable of receiving crosses and humiliations with so much joy. Notwithstanding, therefore, the horror with which these vile accusations inspired him, Mgr. de Laval could not help congratulating Boudon on this precious grace of which faith taught him the exceeding value.

These testimonies of confidence and affection from his old friends were not limited to words. Some who believed that soon he would find himself without

employment in the diocese, warmly pressed him to accept a home in their houses, while others, whose position seemed to enable them to serve him, zealously exerted themselves in his behalf. The first to write to Mgr. de Maupas was the Bishop of Petràa. In his letter, which is dated October, 1666, he states all he knew, from the most intimate personal experience, of the Archdeacon's piety and virtue. The Abbé de Thiersault also profited by his place at Court to interest in his favour several exalted personages, to whom Mgr. de Maupas would have willingly given ear and whose representations would have had much weight with him, if his mind had not been unceasingly poisoned by those about him, and had he not been continually harassed by the indiscreet proceedings of M^{me}. de Fourneaux. Thus the most honourable testimonies which could be furnished of Boudon's character came all too late to remove Mgr. de Maupas's prejudices. He could have endorsed all they stated as respected the past. What could any one say of his archdeacon's former piety, zeal, and of the austerity of his morals, of which he had not himself been thoroughly convinced but a very short time previous? These commendations, therefore, went for nothing in his eyes, since he was fully persuaded that the most shameful vices had blasted all this virtue, and stifled all this piety, so that nothing but the outward semblance of his former self remained, to impose on a few credulous folk. The answer he made to an ecclesiastic of Rouen who ventured to plead Boudon's cause shows that such was his view of the case. "I do not know, Monseigneur," said this ecclesiastic, "why you persecute M. Boudon in this manner, for he is an angel, of which your Grandeur has had ample proofs by the great good he has effected

in the diocese." "Yes," answered the Bishop bitterly, "he *was* an angel, and more than an angel, but he is now a fallen one."

It was this obstinate conviction that Boudon had now become a monster of hypocrisy whose ministry could but be an injury to religion, which made Mgr. de Maupas so anxious to get rid of him. Zeal was a very strong element in the Bishop's character, and it was all directed at present to the removal of this supposed scandal. Having ascertained that he was powerless in the matter, and could neither remove him from his office of archdeacon nor interdict the exercise of its functions, he resolved at last to request him to resign. In the hopes of deciding him more readily to take this step, he offered to make him compensation by a pension, or by procuring him a benefice in some other diocese with a more remunerative income. It is strange that he should not have known Boudon better, but, no doubt, he had convinced himself by this time that his disinterestedness, like his other virtues, had been a mere pretence, or had been corrupted in the same unaccountable way. These proffers of pension and compensation in a matter in which he considered God's glory ought alone to be regarded were most revolting to Boudon's pure soul. The painful impressions which they made upon him are recorded in one of his works,* where he relates the circumstance without naming any one. "I knew an ecclesiastic," he says, "who, having suffered extraordinary contradictions, was advised by his friends to yield to the storm; but he was thrown into a state of wonderment, from which he has not yet recovered, when one of the party, and he a man in great repute for virtue, made him a plain and undisguised offer to

* *De la Sainteté de l'Etat Ecclesiastique*, chap. iv.

procure him a pension. 'O my God!' he inwardly exclaimed, 'is this, then, the proposal made to me? They talk to me of a pension, and say not one word of the interests of God! That I should give up the benefice I hold, well and good, if God's glory would be advanced thereby; but let it be bestowed on the worthiest, although there might be nothing for me.' . . . On another occasion the same ecclesiastic was offered in exchange a benefice more lucrative than the one he held. His poor heart was deeply pained, and he replied, with much energy, 'If the benefice in question would entail more blows for me to receive or fresh crosses to endure, it might be worth thinking of.'"

Boudon, in fact, was persuaded that for no earthly or human object ought any priest to quit his benefice, except he were certain that it was for God's glory that he should do so. Now, in the present instance he felt more and more assured that it was the Divine Will to attach him more closely than ever to the places in which he was so cruelly tried. Mgr. de Maupas, accordingly, found him quite immovable in his resolution to remain, and equally proof against the menaces and promises by which he strove to shake it; indeed, the Bishop was so prodigal of the latter as to hint that, if he would consent to the required sacrifice, it might be followed by a return of his favour, and even sent for him more than once to give him a personal assurance to this effect. No human favour, however, could in Boudon's estimation be weighed against the will of God; therefore, at whatever cost to his feelings—and he confessed to M. Bosguérard that it would be great—he was determined to stand on his rights, if forced to do so. St. Paul, as he remarks in the same letter, had appealed

to Cæsar. As for the Bishop's promise of a return of good will in the case of deference to his wishes, he was convinced that Mgr. de Maupas deceived himself; for that so long as he remained under the influence of that unnamed religious, the author of the libellous pamphlet which had wrought him so much injury, no impression could ever be made upon his mind. The ill success of every attempt to remove his prejudices confirmed Boudon in this view. "Rest assured," he writes to his friend Bosguérard, "that the Blessed Virgin manages my affairs, and she does not choose that creatures here below should have any part in them; it is she who will do all. There is no good talking of certain measures which the prelate imagines might satisfy him; he deceives himself: he will never be satisfied until the incomparable Mother of God shall have said, 'It is enough.'"

There was now such a phalanx of good men arrayed against Boudon that, humanly speaking, small hope could be entertained of their being ever undeceived, for the opinion of each fortified that of the rest; and yet, when closely examined, the real basis upon which this superstructure of confident opinion rested, narrows into nothing. These good men had, one may say, mutually converted each other, and now mutually supported each other in their erroneous judgment. If there was any one whose esteem must have been precious to Boudon it was that of P. Eudes, the illustrious and holy man who had done such immense good throughout France and particularly in Normandy, and whose devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the most holy heart of His Blessed Mother, as well as his zeal for the work of the missions, caused Boudon to regard him with the strongest sympathy. There

was also another tie between them in that they were, or had been, intimately united with a number of those holy souls who at that period were treading the paths of perfection. MM. de Renty, de Bernières, and de Laval, the Mère Mechtilde, P. Jean Chrysostome, the saintly director of M. de Bernières, of whom Boudon became afterwards the historian or, rather, the panegyrist, and more besides, are reckoned by P. Eudes's biographer amongst his devoted friends. *He* also had known what it was to suffer from calumny and to endure persecution. He had been accused of fraud, his faith had been suspected, superiors, friends, enemies, all had combined against him, and his reputation had been spared on that single point alone upon which the Archdeacon of Evreux was assailed. Yet neither the memory of what had befallen himself, nor the numerous considerations which must have pleaded in favour of a man such as he had known Boudon to be, availed to fortify him against the perfidious machinations which were employed to deceive him; and God permitted that this additional heavy cross should be laid upon His servant.

Mgr. de Maupas had sent for P. Eudes to help him in the task of founding a seminary, that object so dear to Boudon, and one which he had so strenuously urged upon his bishop. The prelate had been laying aside his savings to devote them to this purpose, and modestly declined assuming the title of founder, in order that by offering the house to the Dean of his Chapter he might induce that ecclesiastic to unite to it a priory with which he was provided. His esteem for P. Eudes's Congregation made him desirous of placing it under his direction, and he kept the Father at Evreux from the beginning of the autumn of 1666 to the close

of the year, that he might procure for its inhabitants the benefit of one of his missions. Knowing well how much credit P. Eudes possessed with Mgr. de Maupas, and that his charity was sure to lead him to take the part of an innocent and calumniated priest, no pains were spared by the Archdeacon's enemies to prejudice him against the accused. How far they succeeded in convincing him of Boudon's actual guilt it is impossible to say with any assurance, but thus much is plain : that, owing to the representations made to him, P. Eudes was persuaded that it would be more for the glory of God and the benefit of souls that the Archdeacon should quit a diocese where he was regarded by the people with contempt, and where his presence was the occasion of a distressing scandal. That such was his view is evident from the advice he gave on this occasion ; advice, moreover, which one of his character would hardly have given had not suspicion found more or less access to his mind, and had not his confidence in Boudon's integrity and discretion been considerably shaken. The same may be said of another eminent man, M. Mallet, Archdeacon of Rouen and a Doctor of the Sorbonne, who had begun to obtain celebrity from his controversy with the Jansenist Arnauld. He, too, warmly coincided in the opinion that the interests of religion made it Boudon's duty to resign ; and both he and P. Eudes urged, as an additional reason, that, the revenue of his benefice being insufficient for his maintenance, he might find himself again under the necessity of accepting aid from M^{me}. de Fourneaux. Herein they showed their ignorance both of the situation of affairs and of Boudon's sentiments. It was vain to speak of pecuniary or prudential considerations to one who looked for help to no living

creature, and whom it was impossible to move from the entire confidence he reposed in the loving care of Divine Providence. "I do not complain of not having enough," he says, writing to Bosguérard in reference to the objections of P. Eudes and M. Mallet; "and, supposing I were to resign my benefice, it would not be for the purpose of obtaining one more remunerative. I assure you, I do not possess a farthing, and yet I am rich enough."

This was literally true, for, strange to say, at the very time when the storm was raging most fiercely against him, and well-nigh every one was standing aloof from him, if not taking part against him, he was receiving through unknown hands as much money as sufficed for his needs; and, so far from M^{me}. de Fourneaux contributing to his support, it was, on the contrary, he who felt himself bound, on hearing of the penury into which she had fallen, to send her some assistance. This he did by the hands of M. Bosguérard, whom he commissioned to go and see her at Conches. He also at this conjuncture thought it charitable to renew personal communications with her, from which he had lately abstained, and to offer her the consolations which she might fairly expect from him under the circumstances. He begs Bosguérard—for it is a letter to this friend which is our authority—to mention some place where he might meet her; adding that he thought this step necessary in view of the state to which she was reduced. The Christian, he said, ought to be far removed from the temper of the world, which draws off from afflicted persons, and ought to value nothing more than the cross of Christ.

The fortitude with which he bore his own was invincible, and, however specious might be the reasons

alleged to induce him to bow to circumstances, nothing could shake the resolution which he had taken to remain at Evreux under the weight of the humiliations heaped upon him. While even good and spiritually minded men judged that his ministry had become profitless in consequence of the contempt into which he had fallen, he entertained far other thoughts, regarding it as a sure presage of the good which God designed thereby to operate in the diocese, and his heart overflowed with charity and joy unspeakable. Writing to M. Bosguérard on the day before he set out for Angers, where he had been requested to give a mission, he says, "I have just been celebrating Mass at the altar of the Mother of God in our cathedral, and you would hardly believe what my feelings for Evreux were during the Holy Sacrifice. It seemed to me that I would gladly go to the Place de Grève to be executed for the benefit of this dear diocese." Then, alluding to the general wish that he should quit it, concerning which some one attached to the cathedral had civilly expressed surprise, he exclaims, "Oh, how I should wish to say to many, *Modicæ fidei, modicæ fidei*—O men of little faith, you will see what will happen! But in the meantime I wait for the Lord; and I returned from the altar with my heart full of hope and joy. Providence! Providence! Let them do and say what they please, I will not and cannot have any other confidence."

The mission at Angers was a complete success. It excited even Boudon's astonishment, and filled him with gratitude to God, to whose glory he referred everything. But what was more remarkable even than the spiritual success of this mission was the enthusiasm with which the missionary was received and entertained. Truly the contrast between his treatment in Poitiers

and that which he had recently experienced in his own diocese was enough to have elated the mind, as well as consoled the heart, of any ordinary good man. But Boudon was not an ordinary good man; he was an extraordinary good man; indeed, we might almost describe him as being two extraordinary men combined in one. The one was a marvel for what he could endure, like some patient animal refusing no burden that was laid upon him: "I am become as a beast before thee;"* the other looked on, commented, rejoiced or wondered, as the case might be, in a strangely disengaged way; for this second self talked freely of the first self, as it might of something separate and distinct. Thus it was that Boudon could record his sufferings and sorrows in detail without a suspicion of sympathy-seeking, and his triumphs without a shadow of self-exaltation. We are conscious of this as we read; for, in one way or other, self-love, if present, is always sure to betray itself; but here we feel its absence.

On this occasion, what we should call in common parlance the "fuss" made about him, if it did not precisely amuse him, which it very probably did—for he had a keen eye for the ludicrous side of things—at least set him musing on the strangeness of the contrast it presented. And so we find him with perfect candour and simplicity giving an account of it all to his confidential friend. After his accustomed reference to the merciful leadings of Divine Providence, he says, "When I think of it I scarcely know where I am, and you would be greatly surprised if you knew the particulars. Whole towns have been stirred at the passage of this man, lost without resource in the world's opinion. He has had

* Psalm lxxii. 23.

to preach evangelical truth, not only in monasteries, but in parishes and in vast churches, where there was a surprising concourse of people of all ranks. Ah me ! they fancied that this lost man was really something, —thank God, however, I know that he is nothing. They came to this man from all quarters, to disclose to him all that was most secret in their consciences ; there was a wonderful throng of people ; they contended with each other who should have him, who should lodge him ; money even was pressed upon him ; everywhere people strove to detain him. He is stopped in his progress, with admirable charity, alike by ecclesiastics, by persons of quality, and by the poor. They escort him from place to place, and even desire to follow him wheresoever he goes. Men who are not in the habit of speaking to anybody of the things of God, being, in fact, thoroughly immersed in the world, have themselves brought in chairs to converse with him, to the surprise of the whole neighbourhood. Strong-minded, independent thinkers, who would scarcely ever go to hear a sermon, have not only attended his instructions but have come and said to him that, if he would remain in their town, they would visit him daily ; members of the judicial body, who are reckoned the clever men of the day, have done the same. Oh, how different are the ways of God from those of men ! It is thus that He extracts glory from everything.”

While Boudon was reaping the fruit of his labours in Poitiers, his enemies at home were busily engaged in maligning him to Mgr. de Maupas, and, unfortunately, M^{me}. de Fourneaux had again begun to bestir herself, than which nothing could have better served their purpose. Freed by Boudon's absence from the check which to a certain extent he was able at times to put

upon her folly, she gave the reins to her silly fancies, and must needs publish some apologetic pamphlets, belauding the Archdeacon and vilifying the Bishop in terms which were as deficient in good taste as in prudence and propriety. It may easily be imagined what harm such productions, conspicuous for their want of talent and judgment, and replete with the bitterness of a mind disordered by grief and anger, must have been calculated to do to Boudon's cause. M. Bosguérard, the faithful friend, who alone watched over his interests at Evreux, felt this keenly, and wrote to him on the subject. Boudon, in consequence, exhorted M^{me}. de Fourneaux to desist from publishing these papers ; for which purpose he availed himself of the services of a person for whom he supposed she had considerable deference to enforce his request, but he by no means expected to succeed, and in his answer to M. Bosguérard we find him striving to console him under the prospect of the new vexations in store ; vexations as trying to his humility as to his patience. "Certainly," he writes, "if only I could have these fine laudatory papers in my hands, I would put them in the fire right gladly." For he is quite aware that he would be accused of being a party to their distribution, and anticipates all the unpleasant comments and criticisms which their absurd contents would elicit. "Having, however," he adds, "done the best in our small power to remedy the evil, all this ought not to deprive us for one moment of that peace of God which surpasseth all understanding."*

M^{me}. de Fourneaux, as he had anticipated, was not to be restrained. She circulated her publications, and they had the precise effect which he had foreseen,

* Philip. iv. 7.

without, however, disturbing his admirable serenity. Nevertheless, he now considered it his duty to break off all communication with this lady, which, so long as there might be hope of benefiting her, his charity had led him to maintain. She then wished to have recourse to Bosguérard's spiritual lights. That young ecclesiastic, who as yet was only a deacon, consulted Boudon as to what reply he should make to her letters. His friend advised him to consent, but told him at the same time how very incapable he believed her to be of deriving any benefit from his care. As for himself, he considered he could no longer serve her except by his prayers, which he continued to offer for her, commending her fervently to our Lord and to His Blessed Mother. "I have a great compassion for her," he says; "for her attachment to her own opinion spoils everything. It is almost useless for her to consult any one, for she follows, in most things at least, only her own fancy, which certainly deceives her greatly. Self-love is predominant in much that she does." He then alludes to certain ill-considered charitable projects of hers, in which he discerned this secret motive. For instance, she had a desire to get together a number of girls whom she could train and direct, and to devote herself to nursing the plague-stricken. Clearly Boudon thought that there was more of nature than of grace in these plans, for he sums up with the expression of a wish that she would seriously think of mortifying herself, that she would cease from putting herself forward, and live a retired life in some small abode, where she might still have the society of a few good people, for her mind needed some occupation.

These last wise counsels, which, no doubt, were transmitted to her, were not followed. The self-love

of which Boudon spoke gave her such confidence in her own views, that nothing and no one could divert her from the unreasonable projects it suggested, or eradicate the fixed idea she entertained that she was bound to use every possible means to vindicate Boudon's reputation and her own, and obtain public reparation for the injury that had been done them. She pushed her absurdity so far as to repair to the Court for the purpose of soliciting the intervention of the royal authority. The wildness of her manner led all who saw her to conclude that the complaints which she poured forth with so much passionate excitement were but the ravings of a half-crazed mind. Such appears also to have been the opinion of Louis XIV., who consented to grant her a few minutes' audience. It was one which naturally suggested itself to the unprejudiced; but far different was the conclusion drawn in the diocese of Evreux from these last vagaries of M^{me}. de Fourneaux. Most of those who heard of them believed, or affected to believe, that lady's word, when she persisted in declaring that she continued to act under Boudon's advice; and as, of all which exasperation impelled her to say in her own defence, this falsehood was the only assertion which served the purpose of popular malignity, so it was the only one accepted as true and generally adopted. The effect of this belief, however, was so mischievous that Boudon at last thought himself bound to contradict M^{me}. de Fourneaux's declaration, and to disabuse, so far as he could, the minds of those who did not as yet seem to have altogether withdrawn their esteem from him. He begged his remaining friends at Rouen and Paris to do him this service, and to one of them we find him saying that, a long time previous, he had forewarned

M^{me}. de Fourneaux that the deplorable obstinacy with which she followed the ill-regulated movements of her imagination would sooner or later affect her mind; adding that he forgave her all the humiliations she had caused him, being convinced that her intellect had already begun to suffer.

His prediction was soon fulfilled by the complete alienation of mind into which the unhappy woman fell, and from which she never recovered. This result ought, at least, to have exonerated Boudon from the charge of having been the instigator of her violent and unbecoming behaviour during the course of this miserable affair. But such was not the case. When prejudices have become firmly established, everything which would be calculated to remove them is resisted and repelled; it cannot so much as find a hearing, far less an impartial consideration. Minds are made up—people like to have their minds made up—and thus the will clings to the old calumnies and causes their influence to survive, in the face of all counter evidence, however conclusive it may be.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BISHOP'S ACTIVE ENMITY AGAINST BOUDON, AND ITS HUMILIATING RESULTS—BEHAVIOUR OF BOUDON THROUGHOUT THESE TRIALS.

WHEN Mgr. de Maupas heard of the striking success of Boudon's mission at Angers and of the welcome he had there received, he was extremely angry; and from that moment began the active enmity with which he pur-

sued his archdeacon, using his utmost endeavours to destroy his reputation in all quarters. With this object he wrote to all those places at which Boudon had by his evangelical labours acquired the greatest veneration and esteem, in order to deprive him of the means of exercising his ministry in them for the future. Boudon, according to him, was profaning and degrading the priesthood, and he must put a stop to the sacrilege. He prosecuted these measures with the greatest energy in the adjoining dioceses, at Chartres, Rouen, and at Paris, neglecting nothing which might ensure their success. The only excuse that can be offered for this conduct is, that by this time the Bishop of Evreux was convinced that his archdeacon was a very wicked man and a most consummate hypocrite. We say excuse, for it surely did not amount to a justification. Mgr. de Maupas, as has been observed, was remarkable for his ardent zeal, and no virtue, perhaps, is more liable to run into excess or to be mingled with alloy. It is the virtue which borders most nearly on passion, and this is possibly one reason for its proneness to become thus deteriorated. "Matter for zeal," says a spiritual writer, "is never wanting. What fine pretexts cannot natural activity find therein for abandoning itself to all its ardour! God is offended; those who are committing sin are ruining themselves; those who are its witnesses are taking scandal; the progress of the disorder must be checked, and checked immediately. Thus argued the eager and imprudent labourers in the Gospel: Let us go at once and root up this accursed cockle: *Imus et colligimus.*"* Again, speaking on the same subject of zeal against sin, he says, "A useful disposition, if you know how to regulate it; an ardour hurtful to yourself as well as

* P. de Lombez, *Traité de la Paix Intérieure*, p. 28.

to others, if you indulge it without moderation. Besides the loss of peace, charity, as St. Francis says, will be infallibly wounded both in your own soul and in your dealings with your neighbour, if your zeal against his faults is converted into anger. You cannot, therefore, be too much on your guard against the commotions and the fire of an ardent and impetuous zeal, amid which the Lord dwells not, and where, nevertheless, eyes clouded by impatience think they see Him alone. . . . The more your zeal becomes inflamed, and the greater in your eyes the evil appears which excites it, and the more you feel urged to oppose it at once and with all your power, so much the more ought you to mistrust it and be on your guard against its sallies, because you have reason to fear that this fire does not proceed from God, that its lurid light may cause you to see objects quite differently to what they really are, and betray you into mistakes which, far from accelerating its cure, would only aggravate the evil." *

However high the reputation which Boudon enjoyed in the towns he had evangelised, it could not stand against the incriminations of his own bishop, and a bishop, too, such as Mgr. de Maupas, who was held in the greatest respect and esteem. These complaints, accordingly, had all the effect which might be anticipated, and, if there were some who continued to doubt Boudon's guilt in the face of such high authority, they thought it well to disguise their sentiments out of consideration for the Bishop of Evreux, and practically sided with the rest. At Chartres both pulpits and confessionals were closed against him, and at Rouen he was no longer able to preach except in some religious communities. He had still, however, private friends

* P. de Lombes, *Traité de la Paix Intérieure*, p. 203.

in the latter city whose affection and good opinion nothing could shake. Rouen had witnessed the development of his early piety, and it was hard for those who had full knowledge of his saintly beginnings to believe that he had come to so disgraceful an end. Besides, he had visited the place at later epochs of his life, exhibiting the model of a perfection which it would have been impossible to counterfeit, and, above all, to maintain its deceitful semblance for long consecutive years. Amongst these faithful friends were M. and M^{me}. de Brébion and the family of M. de Bernières, who had all known him from his boyhood; to whom may be added the most distinguished and most worthy amongst the ecclesiastics of the place, and the religious of the strictest communities.

Mgr. de Maupas learned with vexation that Boudon still received some compensation in that city for the general scorn and contempt with which he was treated elsewhere, and resolved to deprive him of this last resource and, if possible, close every heart as well as every house against him. In attempting thus to rob a man, not only of public esteem, of which he might make an undue use, but of private friendship, and thereby drive him into total isolation and possibly reduce him to actual starvation, the Bishop was surely altogether inexcusable. It cannot be lawful for any Christian to hunt another down, as if he were some noxious beast, and render him a social outlaw. Yet such, in fact, was the course which Mgr. de Maupas pursued. He made several journeys to Rouen in order to have personal interviews with those who still treated Boudon with respect, and actually remained for three hours arguing with M. Fossillon, Curé of St. Nicolas, and trying to ruin the Archdeacon in the esteem of

that ecclesiastic. He expressed in the bitterest manner, both to M. Fossillon himself and to another priest who was present, his sense of Boudon's criminal and hypocritical conduct, as he considered it, striving to prove to them how detrimental it was to general edification that respectable ecclesiastics should hold any communication with one whose perversity had been made manifest, notwithstanding the pains he had taken to hide it. This was surely a gross exaggeration, even from the Bishop's point of view. Boudon was not a convicted criminal. He had never been put on his trial, he had never been heard in his own defence. Mgr. de Maupas thought that he had the very strongest reasons for crediting the reports of his misconduct, and, acting on this persuasion, had deemed it right to remove him from the office of Vicar-General, the only one at his disposal. This was surely a mark of disapprobation sufficient to discharge him of all personal responsibility; for the archdeaconry, as has been observed, he had no power to revoke. Public edification, moreover, was certainly not advanced, but quite the reverse, by any further measures calculated to discredit the holder of that office. The only explanation is to be found in the fact, that Mgr. de Maupas was urged on by those whose object it was to make the place untenable by the man they hated, and that he, on his part, by morbidly dwelling on the mischief which they represented as accruing from Boudon's presence and ministry, had made to himself a false conscience on the subject.

Mgr. de Maupas did not convert M. Fossillon to his way of thinking, but a bishop is an imposing personage, and his opinion, forcibly expressed, albeit only as an opinion, has naturally much weight with his ecclesiastical inferiors. The consequence was that Mgr. de

Maupas was able to extract from the reluctant Curé a promise to forego, at least for a time, any communication with Boudon. If the Bishop was thus successful in persuading a most worthy ecclesiastic, against his own convictions, to separate himself from the Archdeacon—although we must add that M. Fossillon speedily repaired the temporary injustice into which he had been betrayed—it may be concluded that he had a much easier victory in the case of those who, not having had the same opportunities of appreciating the merits of the accused, had less reason to question or hold out against the Bishop's testimony and strongly expressed wishes. The result was that Boudon soon became nearly as great an outcast at Rouen as at Evreux. There was not a house into which he ventured to enter amongst the many that previously had been open to him, for his own delicacy of feeling often prevented him from profiting by the hospitality which was still offered to him, in order to avoid the disagreeable consequences which the kindness of his friends was sure to entail upon them. As an instance of the violent efforts made to detach both friends and penitents from him, the case of M^{me}. de St. Amand may be adduced. For years he had been her director, and now she had to encounter the solicitations of Mgr. de Maupas, as well as those of the Grands-Vicaires of Rouen, and the remonstrances of a religious whom she had temporarily taken as her confessor, all of whom vehemently pressed upon her the danger which both her salvation and her reputation would incur if she continued to see and consult Boudon.* Accordingly, he himself felt that he

* In stating this circumstance, as well as that which follows, of M. Mallet's intimation to Boudon that the Archbishop would forbid his saying Mass, we have followed the chronological order

was bound to give up her direction for a time, lest he should draw upon her the same accusations which had been made against M^{me}. de Fourneaux. Mgr. de Maupas was actively seconded in his proceedings by the Archdeacon of Rouen, M. Mallet, who employed all his authority and influence to close Boudon's access to the communities which still retained their confidence in him, and he even on one occasion ventured to threaten him with a prohibition from the Archbishop * to celebrate Mass in any of the churches of Rouen. He had gone too far, however, in this instance, for the Archbishop refused to issue any such inhibition. That prelate, in fact, notwithstanding all that the Bishop of Evreux had said to him, still preserved his old regard for Boudon, whose virtues had an irresistible attraction for him. Hence he always received him kindly, compassionated him, and secretly assured him that he was persuaded of his innocence; but this was all. The fear of disobliging Mgr. de Maupas and of failing in the respect due to a brother bishop prevented him, even in his own diocese, from openly taking the part of a priest whom he believed to be unjustly accused and harshly treated.

But the mortifications which Boudon had to expe-

of the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, but a letter of Boudon's to M. Bosguérard (cxxvi. in the Abbé Migne's collection) would lead us to refer them to an earlier date. It is a matter, however, of no great practical importance, and, as the author of that Life had access also to the unpublished manuscript letters of Boudon, it has appeared desirable generally to follow his authority when the case was not very clear. The want of date in almost every one of Boudon's letters, and his unmethodical mode of relating or alluding to circumstances, render it matter of very great difficulty to refer every incident to its proper place in his history.

* François de Chanvalon de Harlay, made Archbishop of Rouen in 1651, and afterwards of Paris in 1670.

rience at the hands of almost all whom he had formerly loved and respected, were accompanied by others of a grosser description, which his enemies were busy in procuring for him from the lower classes, whose minds had been poisoned by their infamous attacks on the Arch-deacon's moral character. Thus, on one occasion, when going to preach to the Discalced Carmelites, whom no solicitations could induce to abandon him, he had, before entering the convent, to endure insults and even blows from a street porter who was at the door, and who was excited and encouraged by the insolent laughter of some women whom Boudon is so lenient as to describe as certain *bonnes dévotes*. At Evreux he was every day subject to similar indignities, and he could scarcely go a step from his lodging without meeting with a mortification. Ecclesiastics even would openly converse together of his alleged vices under the porch of the cathedral, and point at him with the finger while the people were coming out of church. Strange that they should not have seen that they were degrading themselves as well as the priestly character, which Boudon, had he even been guilty, still possessed, by such shameless behaviour. One day the Theologus of the Chapter, preaching in that same pulpit which had been used as a rostrum whence to declare his unworthiness to hold any ecclesiastical appointment, assailed him with reproaches for his inactive and self-indulgent life. If he had been inactive—which, however, was not the case—who had striven to reduce him to inactivity? As for the self-indulgence of his life, it was an accusation too preposterous, we should have thought, for any one to venture to bring against a man whose ascetic habits were so well known. But people were in a humour to swallow anything and everything, and,

although, as if in just punishment of the falsehoods he was pouring forth, the preacher's memory failed him after uttering this violent declamation, so that he had to descend from the pulpit leaving his discourse unfinished, nevertheless it made a great impression on the audience.

Nothing was too absurd or too abominable not to find credence if asserted of this veritable scape-goat of society ; and it will hardly be believed that the Bishop himself gave ear to the pretended revelations of an Ursuline nun at Evreux, which, it is said, were of a nature repugnant to common sense and even offensive to modesty. This wretched woman alleged that she knew from the lips of the Blessed Virgin herself that it was God's will that Boudon should be expelled from the diocese ; and this was apparently considered as sufficient warrant for the genuineness of her supposed heavenly communications. But, as the Archbishop of Rouen said in confidence to one of his Curés—whom nevertheless he begged not to allow Boudon to preach in his pulpit for fear of giving offence to the Bishop of Evreux—that prelate had not common sense where his Archdeacon was concerned. So successful had been the efforts made to defame him in the estimation of every class, that whenever he went to Rouen on business, where his face was nearly as well known as at Evreux, he had great difficulty in obtaining a miserable bed in some poor inn, since there was hardly any hostelry, however mean, in which, if recognised, he would not be refused a lodging. If he went into a church to say Mass, the sacristan would very commonly refuse to give him the sacerdotal vestments ; it was well if he did not add that such a man as he was unworthy to set his foot within a church. “ As for a

confessor," writes Collet, "I know not whether he could have found one in that great town; what I do know is, that at Evreux there was scarcely a priest willing to hear his confession. In a word, one who was an eyewitness says, 'He was treated at Rouen with no more pity than if he had been a beast thrown upon a dunghill.'" At Paris he used to find satires of himself on the tables of the very publishers whom he employed to print his works. A great number of his friends in the capital turned their backs upon him, and he scarcely ventured to visit any of those who still preserved their regard for him, lest he should compromise them with other persons. As he drew next to nothing from his archdeaconry he was often in great straits, and he once passed five days sick of fever and well-nigh famished in the attic of a poor tailor, when, fortunately, some Sisters of Providence heard of his condition and offered him a room in the vicinity of their convent. He accepted their charitable aid with much gratitude and deep humility, in token of which he kissed the threshold of the door as he entered, giving thanks to God for having accorded a place of refuge to him, a miserable sinner deserving only of hell, while his Lord when on earth had not where to lay His head.

Boudon's steps were dogged by his enemies, so that whithersoever he went he found the public mind poisoned against him and the most odious calumnies in circulation; and, what was most cruel of all, these accusations were supported and actively propagated by his own bishop. Means were even adopted to discover his intentions and purposes, in order that a double dose of slander might be administered in any locality in which he was expected to make a stay. Thus, it having transpired that he proposed spending three

months at Caen, letters were at once despatched to those whose piety had led to the formation of an intimacy with him, warning them to regard him with mistrust and not be misled by his hypocritical exterior. Such were the terms employed by one of the members of the Seminary of Foreign Missions, who did not scruple to accuse him of the grossest immoralities. "I committed, it was said"—thus he writes to M. Bosguérard—"things which it is not fit I should put on paper, but which others had made no difficulty in doing; that the good I did was only hypocrisy; and that an ecclesiastic had assured the writer that, having been six months with me, he had never seen me making mental prayer."* It would appear, from this same letter of Boudon's to M. Bosguérard, that the persons to whom he was indebted for having his character thus effectually maligned amongst those who had so highly honoured him in former days, were a certain M. de Berville and his daughter, whose hearts had been touched and changed by the sermons he had preached in the church of St. Pierre on his first appointment to the archdeaconry, but who had now taken violently against him. Those friends of his at Caen who let him know that he had an enemy at the Seminary of Foreign Missions concealed the name of the individual from motives of discretion, but he tells M. Bosguérard that, as there were only two members of that institution who had any correspondents at Caen, M. Fermanel and M. Chamesson, and as he could not entertain the smallest suspicion of M. de Fermanel, who, moreover, was ill at the time and was not even acquainted, as he believed, with his design of proceeding to Caen, it could only be the "good M. Chamesson,"

* Letter cxxiv.

of which, besides, he had other indirect evidence. It was sufficient to be the vilest traducer of this holy man to be dealt with tenderly by him, and even mentioned with gratitude; and so he blesses God, His most holy Mother, and the angels and saints for M. de Chameson's behaviour to him. Yet this was in no wise because he was insensible to so cruel an attack; for he adds, "This is one of the heaviest crosses which I have encountered. He sends word that I have been found out; that it is evident that there is good reason to treat me ill; that he means to say the same in other quarters; and he writes as if, seemingly, such were the sentiments of the Seminary generally; at any rate, this is the inference to be drawn." It is scarcely possible that this could really have been the case, and Boudon does not himself appear to have attached full credit to the implied assertion. However, he was prepared for this, as for all else, and ends by saying, with his usual simplicity, "One must be content with everything."

And so he was, and that without a struggle where he alone was the sufferer; the most painful trial to his charitable heart must have been when he became the cause of injury to others in consequence of their fidelity to him. We have seen how he was prepared to encounter every privation and hardship rather than run the risk of compromising the interests of any person; how deeply therefore must it have distressed him to be the occasion of injury to the one friend who had openly and boldly stood by him when all forsook him and fled, including even his well-wishers. This one friend was his devoted disciple, the Abbé Bosguérard. That he should be the loser as respected promotion was, of course, to be expected, since Mgr. de Maupas looked coldly on all who would not take part against the Archdeacon,

and who still held communication with him. Boudon, however, might not have thought so much of this, particularly in the case of one who aspired, like himself, to tread the path of heavenly, not of earthly, ambition, and to advance rather in the love of God than in the esteem of any creature, no matter how influential; but to be thwarted in his vocation for the priesthood was a matter of very different importance. Mgr. de Maupas had early noticed the talents and virtues of young Bosguérard, and designed to place him in some distinguished position, for which he was so eminently qualified. Scarcely, indeed, had he been made deacon, when the Bishop appointed him professor of theology in his seminary, empowering him to preach throughout the diocese, and to give ecclesiastical conferences to all who presented themselves to receive orders. But the persevering attachment which M. Bosguérard continued to manifest towards Boudon had wholly deprived him of favour in the eyes of Mgr. de Maupas, who now withdrew all his testimonies of regard. Before giving this public mark of his displeasure, he had tempted the young ecclesiastic by the offer of lucrative benefices and high promotion, and had lavished on him all the winning acts of persuasion at his command; but promises, caresses, flattery—everything failed to vanquish his constancy. No bribe could move him to give up his friend. For this fidelity to duty and affection the Bishop ought to have honoured him; but, so far from entertaining these sentiments, he was not ashamed to treat this noble conduct as a disqualification for the priesthood, and absolutely to refuse M. Bosguérard ordination unless he would consent to break with Boudon. This threat had as little effect as the previous promises. Thus the priesthood seemed closed to this worthy young man.

He had a friend, however, who, unknown to himself, was to interfere in his behalf. This was M^{lle}. de Bouillon, who had remained unshaken in her attachment to Boudon, and who highly esteemed his young disciple. She went boldly to Mgr. de Maupas and asked him to give a dimissory letter for M. Bosguérard's ordination at Rouen. The prelate, taken by surprise, was not prepared with any evasive answer, for a direct refusal it was difficult for him to give, particularly to a lady of her condition, who, moreover, was so eminent a benefactress to Evreux by her abundant alms and the charitable institutions which she was continually founding in the diocese. Accordingly, he granted the Princess's request, and gave the letter; but, either repenting of what he had done, or never having purposed that it should have any practical result, he despatched an express to the Archbishop of Rouen, begging him in most pressing terms not to pay any regard to the dimissory letter, and to refuse to confer the orders. His messenger fortunately arrived too late, for such expedition had been used on the other side that the deed was already accomplished: M. Bosguérard was already ordained priest, and had received that indelible character which neither bishop nor archbishop nor the highest archangel in heaven could efface for all eternity. All that Mgr. de Maupas could do was to refuse to give him any benefice in his diocese, and he remained in consequence without any ecclesiastical employment until he was appointed parish priest of St. Nicolas at Rouen on the resignation of M. Fossillon.

One cannot but observe that of the remnant who clave to Boudon through evil report and good report a large majority were women. When we see that faithful band undeterred from following him

in his shame and ignominy, we remember how it was the daughters of Jerusalem alone who ventured to lift up their voices and bewail the Saviour of the world as He trod the dolorous way to Calvary. The communities of women (as already observed) with scarcely an exception stood by Boudon through his long trial, as, evidently, did also a not inconsiderable number of women living in the world, with the generous Louise de Bouillon at their head, as we have just had occasion to notice. This special fidelity of the devout female sex under trying circumstances may be, no doubt, in a great degree attributed to the predominance of the affections in women. They are led more by the instinct of the loving heart than by dry reasoning, and in many cases the former is, after all, the surer guide. Perhaps none of them could have drawn out as fully their grounds for believing Boudon guiltless as could his adversaries their reasons for condemning him. No matter; if they could not *prove* him to be innocent, they *knew* him to be so, which was better; and they were in the right, as the future was to manifest. A future which should have in store the rehabilitation of Boudon's character would, indeed, at that epoch have seemed to be a sheer impossibility. What could be alleged in his favour which friends had not already urged unheeded? and then time, merely as time, deepens convictions when once they have taken root. No fresh evidence is needed; what we have thought for a long period comes to have the strongest hold upon us from that very circumstance alone; so great is the force of habit in all things. There are traces in the correspondence of Boudon, as well as positive proof in the recorded acts of those former friends whose minds had become gradually warped and prejudiced against him, of a

greater activity and intensity of opposition as time wore on. This was certainly true in the case of the Bishop, and there is reason to believe the same, in a measure, of P. Eudes and other good men.

It is a pleasing contrast to turn from a consideration of the persecution of which Boudon was the object to the manner in which he bore it. Its acrimony never excited or irritated him, its protracted length never wearied him. We never detect in his behaviour the slightest movement of impatience, or in his language the faintest shadow of resentment. A bitter expression never proceeds from his lips or from his pen; for his heart seemed to be a fountain of sweetness, and the pardon of enemies and the forgiveness of injuries to require no effort on his part. If Boudon had been capable of nourishing the least feeling of resentment against any human being, it might surely have been against that perfidious religious who, more than any one, may be looked upon as the author and contriver of all the misfortunes which had fallen upon him, and whose conduct was the more trying because Boudon had established a title to his gratitude by the charitable services which he had frequently rendered him on past occasions. Nor had this ungrateful man been merely the prime motor of the storm raised against him; Boudon well knew that his enmity was unsleeping, and that he had completely got the ear of Mgr. de Maupas, into which he never ceased to distil the venom of his malice, misrepresenting his every act, and using every means at his disposal to keep the Bishop's anger up at fever heat. Yet it is thus that we find this holy man speaking of both the prelate and his ill adviser in a letter to M. Bosguérard:—"I endeavour, with the help of Heaven, to speak well of the prelate everywhere.

As for the good Father, who serves as the instrument of Providence to confirm his estrangement from us, I am not surprised at it: both he and others have shown but little sense of the services I have done them. So much the better; God alone suffices me. As for you, consult the prelate's temper by gentleness and respect. I am glad to hear that the good Father says I am a proud creature, for it is true, but I must confess to you that I have a great wish to be humble;" and elsewhere he says, "Let me know about the health of our good prelate; we ought to be mindful to pray much for him, in order that the Divine Will may be accomplished in his person." He never spoke of Mgr. de Maupas save in terms of affection and respect, or without a charitable consideration of all who were most actively employed in traducing him; nay more, he used all his influence to inspire his friends with the same sentiments. He begged M. Bosguérard, in particular, never to support his cause with heat or asperity, and to refrain even from direct contradiction of the opinions expressed by his enemies, contenting himself with modestly suggesting something, or dropping a few words, as if casually, in his defence. But Boudon had a great repugnance to self-justification, and, if ever he saw reason to say anything in his own vindication, it was with feelings of confusion and abasement such as a guilty man might well experience. Doubtless there were many who could not understand such a state of mind, and who drew disadvantageous conclusions from behaviour so unusual in those who are falsely accused.

We find him once reproaching himself severely for having commissioned M. Bosguérard to give a few explanations to some friends at Paris whose esteem and affection must have been very dear to him. We

possess both the letters, and so can judge of the extreme tenderness of his conscience in this respect. And yet, perhaps, conscience is not precisely the word to use, for here there was not the slightest matter of sin, and with that alone does conscience deal; rather may we say it was a delicacy of mind, with which the extreme delicacy of the Spirit of God inspires those souls which are specially dear to Him, and which have abandoned themselves unreservedly to His guidance. This character of the Spirit of God is peculiarly observable in what ordinary people would call small matters. In enumerating the various proofs of His delicacy in the guidance of souls, a spiritual writer mentions this first: that the great theatre of the operations of the Holy Ghost is little things. "Undoubtedly," he says, "the Spirit of God acts by the working of His grace on the worst of sinners to raise them from their evil state, but these great criminals, who thus show forth the fire of His zeal and of His love, do not display His delicacy. The great and the delicate are not terms mutually related, but the little and the delicate have a natural affinity to each other. It is in little things that the Holy Spirit shows how delicate He is; it is of little things that He displays His high value; and it is in them that is most peculiarly manifested the mystery of His operations."* For God, we know, is a jealous God, and in proportion to the love with which He regards a soul is the jealousy with which He watches and guards it. All must be His in these beloved ones; what others less closely united to Him might do, not only without offence, but even with profit, cannot be permitted in *them*. Not a word, not so much as a look, or a thought, but must belong exclusively to the

* P. Guillozé, *Conférences Spirituelles*, p. 184.

great Lover ; and, if for a moment they are betrayed into aught that bears but the semblance of seeking any secondary object, however in itself lawful or, perhaps, laudable, He sends a word of silent reproach to those souls which makes them bewail as an infidelity what to the less favoured is an imperceptible fault, or would even be regarded by them as a proper and prudent action.

Boudon had given himself over unreservedly to Divine Providence, looking only to Its loving care of him through the ministry of our Blessed Lady, his dear Mother, and of the holy angels and saints. What seemed to him a departure, however slight, from the spirit of this act of oblation and abandonment became to him the subject of self-accusation. This clearly appears from the expressions contained in the second of the letters just alluded to. "I am pained by the last letter I wrote to you," he says, "as well as by that to M. de Thiersault, and I beg you to let him know this as soon as you can ; for, after all,—God alone and His Providence alone through the Blessed Virgin, our good Mother and most glorious Lady, and all the saints !" Then, after stopping to salute his correspondent's guardian angel, as well as all those of Paris and its patron saints, he continues : "It seems to me that I ought to keep silence, and not take precautions. Let what will happen ; should our best friends turn against us, they are but creatures, that is, things of nothing. There is but God alone. For the rest, I deserve all that can be said and done against me, and I deserve far more ; I deserve hell ; I see that I ought not to say a word for myself, nor even manifest the least sign of emotion.* I see this very clearly. As

* The term used is *sourciller*, which literally means "raise an eyebrow."

for the state in which I am, I have never met with anything better; my soul is consumed in reflecting on the great mercies of Heaven towards me in placing me in it. I assure you that I esteem it more than I should the power of raising the dead, or the being employed in great functions, whether of preaching or any other. Oh! how well it fares with me; my soul suffers at the recollection of my last two letters. Go to M. de Thiersault, then, and report to him these last sentiments of mine."

To grace alone must we look for the source of the generous courage and heroic resignation displayed throughout his trials by one whom nature had ill fitted to bear up against them; for Boudon's was no soul or frame of iron, and we have the testimony of M. Bosguérard, who so well knew him, to what he must have endured owing to the extreme sensibility of his heart, the liveliness of his imagination, and the delicacy of his temperament. Nor was he left to conjecture alone in this matter; for to this faithful friend Boudon did not scruple to confide that he suffered excessively, and that he had "fallen into a very abyss of bitterness and sorrow." But in the midst of all these sinkings of nature, he possessed his soul in unalterable patience; not a furrow of care marred the serenity of his countenance, not a shade of variation came to disturb the equability of his manner. There was the same graciousness as heretofore, the same easiness of access to all who accosted him, the same sweetness and gentleness which had always distinguished him. It is the peace of God in the centre of the soul which can alone work such miracles as this. We shall see presently how Boudon, supported by victorious grace, not only preserved his peace of mind and bore up against adversity,

but rose superior to it, applying himself with the same vigour, firmness, and zeal to the discharge of his duties as when he had the cheering support of popular esteem and the encouragement and commendation of his superiors.



CHAPTER XIV.

BOUDON'S PERSEVERANCE IN THE DISCHARGE OF HIS OFFICE—HIS CHARACTER VINDICATED.

BOUDON, as we have seen, could not be ejected by the Bishop from his office of archdeacon, and in retaining it he certainly did not purpose to omit any one of the duties which it imposed upon him. Yet, when we remember the open contempt into which he had fallen, nothing possibly could be more mortifying than the situation which was its result. Everywhere he had to encounter, not only the absence of that personal consideration which was due to him, but the presence of an obstinate spirit of rebellion against all he designed or undertook. Nothing, however, could make him relax aught of his vigilance, exactness, or decision. He also insisted on a proper respect being shown to his office. As long as he looked only at himself, we have seen him willingly submitting to be trampled upon by all men, nay, rejoicing at having become the object of their scorn and the victim of their injustice; but, as a priest of God, as archdeacon, as one holding an office committed to him by God, which regarded the honour of His worship and the interests of religion, he reckoned

himself bound to cause the character of the Master whom he served and the authority he exercised in His name to be revered in his person.

We have already seen with what zeal he applied himself from the very first to the discharge of his obligations in the diocese. In order to impart more solemnity to his visitations, and excite a more lively interest among the people, he was in the habit of having the bells rung to announce his arrival, and required that the Curés should receive him at the church door, and there present him with the stole and the key of the Tabernacle. He then closely examined into the condition of the church, and made the most minute inquiries as to the moral and religious state of the parish; he desired to be informed whether there were any lawsuits, dissensions, or public scandals of any sort, and took immediate measures to apply a remedy, acting in all these matters with the most admirable gentleness and patience. In the afternoon he said Vespers, and preached with no further preparation than that which his constant application to God always supplied. If in the course of these visitations he perceived that any of the Curés or other ecclesiastics employed in parochial duties were either negligent in their calling or reprehensible in their behaviour, he warned them privately of their faults in that spirit of fraternal charity, meekness, and forbearance which is so calculated to win the hearts of men and bring them back from their wanderings. His vigilance and strictness in reforming every departure from order, and in noticing the smallest dereliction of duty, had never, as will be remembered, been relished by a large number of the clergy. It was considered to be excessive, because, in fact, it was felt to be inconvenient; as

long, however, as Boudon was supported by the authority of his bishop and enjoyed the veneration of the people, who regarded him as a saint, even those who experienced the greatest repugnance to the discipline he enforced feared to compromise themselves by openly manifesting their discontent. But now that calumny had blackened the Archdeacon's reputation and deprived him of the credit he had once possessed—now that his bishop, so far from favouring his endeavours, took every occasion to thwart and impede him in the exercise of his office—the case was widely different, and all who were so minded were conscious that they could with impunity brave an authority which lacked the power to compel submission. Accordingly, his most undoubted rights were systematically opposed, even when their exercise might be clearly conducive to public edification; all his prerogatives were disputed, and everywhere and in everything he encountered a resistance equally vexatious and devoid of all reasonable pretext. It had been, for example, an immemorial rule in the diocese of Evreux that the Curés should not wear the stole in the presence of the archdeacon; nevertheless, no sooner had Boudon been installed than they began to dispute his right to this customary mark of deference to the dignity of his office. Boudon, who was far more solicitous in all that concerned the interests of religion than in matters of mere personal honour to himself, was willing to cede this point provided the Curés would meet him in procession at the church door, singing the *Veni Creator*; would unite with him in praying for the departed; and also exhort their flocks to be present at the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and at the discourse he delivered on the occasion.

The success of this compromise had been striking, for the solemnity imparted to the reception attracted the parishioners in great numbers. The days on which the Archdeacon's visits took place were, indeed, looked upon in the country places quite in the light of festivals, and great profit was everywhere derived from the instructions he gave. All this ought to have been a source of much joy and edification to the pastors of these different parishes ; so far, however, was this from being the case that, although they had agreed to the arrangement, in order to carry their point about wearing the stole, they soon wearied of it and regarded the whole thing as a burdensome formality of which they would gladly be rid. The time had at last arrived when they could speak their minds on the subject without check, and they now openly declared that the visits of the archdeacon ought to be confined to inquiring into the revenues of the fabrics and inspecting the accounts of the churchwardens ; but, as they could make no impression upon Boudon or divert him on any plea from his solicitude to promote the good of souls, which he regarded as the main object of his visits, they did their utmost to defeat his purpose and keep his hearers away. It was owing to the ill-will of the Curés, and their malevolent efforts to discredit him with their people, that in a large number of parishes Boudon was left to preach to a mere handful of auditors, where formerly every one had eagerly pressed forward to listen to his exhortations. In his work on the *Holiness of the Ecclesiastical State*, written at this period, he says, "We enter some churches as though into a desert. In some we do not even find the wardens, who spend the time in amusing themselves or in taking a walk. We have seen wardens, when we commenced

an exhortation to penance or an instruction in Christian truths, go off to a corner of the church there to converse together about their official accounts." And again, "I cannot refrain from deploring the blindness of certain persons, who will not endure that archdeacons should act in the true spirit of God, which is the spirit of the Church, and who make every effort to hinder the people from attending at their visitations." Not content with doing this ill service to the interests of religion, some of these Curés, in order to gratify their hatred of Boudon, pushed their forgetfulness of duty so far as to treat him with gross insolence, and shower the most abusive epithets upon him, meanly availing themselves of the humility, patience, and gentleness which he invariably displayed where the offence was only personal to himself. He bore it all as he was wont, but would not resign a tittle of his claims where the order he had established was concerned. The Curés must forego the stole or give him the prescribed reception ; his inquiries must be satisfied regarding the conduct both of clergy and people, and the authority which appertained to him for the repression of scandals and abuses must be respected and obeyed.

His rights must have been clearly incontestable, or, considering his complete isolation and the abject state to which he had been reduced, he could never have come off victorious against such pertinacious resistance and all the legal trickery which was brought to bear against him. But Boudon was thoroughly conversant with canon law, and had applied himself to the detailed study of the duties and prerogatives of his office ; he had also made a compilation of all that General Councils, ecclesiastical assemblies, provincial synods, Papal decrees, and the usages of France supplied in

relation thereto. He had discriminated between what constituted an actual right, and what was to be regarded as only a local and conventional custom; he was therefore well acquainted with his ground, and, when he insisted upon any point, he knew that he had irrefragable authority to support him. Accordingly, when he had fruitlessly exhausted all the milder measures of persuasion and charitable exhortation, he was able to bring forward such clear and precise testimonies in his favour that no plea could be urged against submission. If any, however, still persisted in opposition to his just demands, he was prepared to show them that Christian condescension has its limits, limits which the honour of God imposes on it, and that he had the right, nay, that it was his duty, to strike the rebellious with excommunication and interdict them the exercise of those functions which they thus unworthily abused. Amongst those ecclesiastics who thus added to his crosses was that same Curé of Aigle-ville who has been already mentioned as refusing to exert his influence to repress the scandals connected with the bonfires on the eve of St. John's festival. He was of a restless and turbulent spirit, and seemed to find his congenial atmosphere in quarrels and disputes. He was perpetually instituting lawsuits against the Archdeacon, and Boudon had reason to the very close of his life to "bless Divine Providence," as was his wont, for the never-ceasing exercise which this unruly priest afforded to his patience. The trouble and wearisome opposition which he had himself encountered suggested to him the idea of compiling a treatise on the rights and prerogatives of archdeacons, in order to supply others with readier means of self-defence and, still more, to furnish them with explicit instructions

respecting the duties incumbent upon them in the discharge of an office of which many were more eager to sustain the honours than to fulfil the obligations. But, always yielding to the movements of the Holy Spirit "to do all that He willed, in the manner He willed, and at the time He willed," he followed the interior attraction which led him to compose a series of other works, so that he never found the leisure to accomplish this desire. Four valuable letters, however, which he wrote to M. Bosguérard, on the occasion of dissensions arising between the Curés of Rouen and their archdeacons, and which throw much light on the subject in question, have fortunately been preserved.

There was one, however, of the rights appertaining to his office which Boudon never asserted on his own behalf, and that was the retribution which the clergy of the archdeaconry were bound to make him on the occasion of his visitations, independently of their obligation to defray the costs of his maintenance at such times. The whole revenue of his benefice was, in fact, derived from this source, and, as the expenses which he incurred during his visitations and the charges with which they were burdened absorbed a large portion of the money accruing from these payments, they were not sufficient, at the best, to yield him a decent subsistence. But now they were often refused by the Curés. This was a patent act of dishonesty on their part, yet Boudon never would employ rigorous measures to enforce his claims, although they could not have failed of success. In a letter to M. Bosguérard,* after proving to him that the archdeacon, when visiting his parishes, was indisputably entitled to this retribution at the hands of the Curés, he adds, "Thus much as regards the right

* Letter cclxxii.

in general, but in our own case it would be a great grief to us if we were constrained to forego our poverty, which we value more than all earthly riches. Never shall we think that we meet with too many checks, if they serve to keep us in that state, and even to increase it. A benefice with revenue attached to it would be insupportable to us. It is one of the great and inestimable favours of Divine Providence to have procured me a benefice which does not withdraw me from my unreserved abandonment to Its care. It is a good mother, whom I do not desire to exchange for anything whatsoever. Let others be wise, and wise even in Jesus Christ, taking the ordinary precautions to ensure subsistence; let them have revenues for that end, and let them make use of them; as for us, we are fools in Jesus Christ, forbearing to adopt such measures. Let others be strong, we are weak, laying in no store of human prudence. Let them be distinguished, and let us remain obscure. Nevertheless, we exclaim with the great Apostle, 'In all things we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed; we are straitened, but are not destitute; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken; we are cast down, but we perish not.'* I will say to the Lord, 'Thou art my protector and my refuge: my God in Him will I trust.'†

This was his attraction, and he did well to follow it. He believed that the more completely we abandoned ourselves to God's keeping, the more was He pledged by His love to provide for us. His tender mercies, it is true, are over all His works, but, as it is a peculiar Providence which guards Israel, His Church, so also, within that Church, the kingdom and family of the Son of His love, He has His chosen souls, bound to

* 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

† Psalm xc. 2.

Him by nearer and nearer ties in proportion as they are drawn closer to Him by abandoning themselves into His hands; souls, to whom He is prodigal of the refinements of His charity, nay, for whom He not seldom works even miracles to supply their needs. But it is a special grace to be called to this peculiar nearness, a grace not vouchsafed to all. Boudon, therefore, laid down no rule. "Let others be wise," he said, "*wise even in Jesus Christ.*" In using ordinary prudence, such persons do not err, or he would not thus have described them. Their grace went no further; and had they imitated in a formal manner the utter self-despoilment of saints, believing that by so doing they established a sort of claim on an extraordinary Providential supply of their necessities, they would have committed a presumptuous mistake. God is not to be thus bargained with. To give up all to and for Him must ever retain its character of a holy venture, although no venture can really be safer. "*Jacta super Dominum curam tuam, et Ipse te enutriet**—Cast thy care upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Boudon was too good a director not to know that in the case of the counsels, if there is danger of not corresponding to grace, there is also peril in running beyond it; therefore he qualifies his words while pointing out the higher way, to which he had been called from his youth up and which he had embraced with all his heart.

Next to his patience, nothing is more remarkable, during the long period that Boudon was subjected to these persecutions, than the total absence of anything like an effort on his part to justify himself and prove his innocence. Some might be disposed to attribute

* Psalm liv. 23.

this inaction to sheer hopelessness of success, but to do so would be an error. He never took a purely natural view of any of the events which befell him; he had placed himself and his cause in the hands of God and of our Blessed Lady, and, if he could not discern in what manner the truth would be brought to light, he never entertained the slightest doubt but that one day it would be so. Thus, he knew none of the vicissitudes of hope and fear which alternately elate and depress those who look to human probabilities for the prospect of deliverance. When the time should have arrived which the Will of God had fixed for the cessation of his trials, he was convinced that all the efforts of his enemies would be powerless, and that his troubles would cease as soon as she whom he had chosen in Heaven for his protectress and his mother should say, "It is enough." From his close and frequent communications with God in prayer he had derived a secret presentiment that this hour was approaching, although never did there appear to be less probability of a change in his favour. Time had set its seal on the calumnious fabrication which had ruined his character and estranged from him, or scared away, well-nigh every friend he had possessed. But the more he was deserted by men, the more every earthly stay failed him, the more confidently did he cast himself on the bosom of God's mercy, with perfect love and acquiescence in His holy will. Moreover, if he had lost earthly friends, he knew he had friends in Heaven far more loving and more powerful to aid him. To these he turned, making frequent pilgrimages, and performing all his practices of devotion towards the Blessed Virgin and the saints with redoubled fervour. He often repaired to Notre Dame de Chartres to invoke the great Mother of God, and, when

at Evreux, he visited almost daily some altar consecrated to her. He might also often be seen kneeling at the tomb of the first Apostle of the diocese, St. Taurinus. Thither he frequently went, says M. Bosguérard, "to pour forth his heart in the sorrows which overwhelmed him." Indeed, it was his example, and the striking protection which the saint was believed to have accorded him, which reanimated at Evreux the memory of its great bishop and rekindled devotion towards him. The sight of the Archdeacon prostrate before the holy relics attracted other afflicted souls also to seek there for succour and consolation in their distress. Others followed, until the number became so great that Boudon had the consolation of beholding the tomb of the saint as much frequented as it had previously been deserted. He subsequently did all in his power to keep up these revived sentiments of love and reverence towards St. Taurinus, "and if," says the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, writing in 1837, "his feast is now celebrated at Evreux with so much solemnity, if such numbers flock thereto, and the graces obtained are so abundant and efficacious, this ought justly to be attributed to Boudon." And so it was that, while men were accounting him to be unworthy of any employment in God's service, he was devoting himself to it with more zeal and application than ever.

It must be noticed that it was during the period of his persecutions that a very large number of those works were written by which he continues to this day to feed the piety of Christian souls and draw them to more intimate union with God. What a high estimate was formed by Boudon himself of the benefit accruing from writings of this character, may be gathered from the

following passage in a letter to M. Bosguérard.* After exhorting him to give Conferences in his church, he says, "Abandon yourself also to the Spirit of God, that you may write by His pure movement in the union of our good Saviour. Works dictated by His Spirit are worth many missions; they extend farther and last longer;" he then proceeds to allege one chief reason why they so excel: namely, that scarcely any missions are directed to the object of leading to perfection in the ways of God; nevertheless, a soul, he says, "entirely given to God, glorifies Him incomparably more than a multitude of others living in a state of ordinary justice." St. Teresa, he reminds him, appearing to St. John of the Cross after her death, exhorted him to labour for perfection, for God, she said, would be more glorified thereby than in other ways. What Boudon observes of missions or retreats given to the faithful in general may be applied in a great measure to ordinary parochial preaching. Pastors devote their sermons mainly to the object of keeping their flocks in the state of grace, withdrawing sinners from the ways of perdition, and instructing all committed to their charge in the chief mysteries of the faith. Works, therefore, which treat more particularly of the interior and spiritual life, and lead on those who in a greater or less degree have a call from God to tread a higher path, have a special apostleship of their own.

Drawing so near as we now are to the term of Boudon's humiliations, we cannot do better than quote his opinion of their value as expressed in the beginning of the same letter in which he offers the advice just recorded. After saying that he esteems nothing great in this world but to be, in fact, nothing, he enumerates

* Letter ccxxviii.

the signal graces he has received from Divine Providence, his good mother, graces which contribute much to this desirable object; and at their head he places what he calls "the grace of abjections, which have come to me," he says, "through all classes of persons rising up against me, persons of distinction as well as of low rank, ecclesiastics and seculars, learned and ignorant; through my being abandoned almost by the whole world and even by my best friends, so that the letters they received from me were either concealed or torn up, people scarcely venturing to allow that they were acquainted with me; through three defamatory libels, in which I was accused of the most abominable crimes, and which, I am told, were even disseminated in foreign lands; through a persecution so bitter that there was hardly a house in which I could find shelter. O my God, how much do I prefer this grace to that formerly vouchsafed to me when, preaching for several months in St. Pierre's at Evreux, the whole town, and even people from distant country parishes, flocked thither in such numbers that, not only was that great church full, but the street and churchyard were also crowded." And again, in another letter,* he says that God had heretofore been pleased to employ him in very many places, pouring abundant blessings on his labours, nevertheless that he esteemed it a greater grace to be living an obscure and hidden life at Evreux. While dwelling on the contemplation of this inestimable favour, he describes himself as though gazing into an abyss of Divine mercy, and is fain to exclaim, "O God, infinitely good, what have I done to merit that Thou shouldst not leave me to die in the exercise of some brilliant ministry!" Accordingly, his occupation during

* Letter ccxxx.

several years was almost entirely limited to the production of his numerous spiritual works, the hostility of his bishop and the intrigues of his enemies depriving him of other outlets to his zeal. Missions were out of the question in the diocese and well-nigh everywhere else, so active had Mgr. de Maupas been in discrediting him in all quarters. It would appear, however, that the evil report had either not reached Moulins, or had not gained credence there, for a letter is still extant, written in the year 1672, in which Boudon is solicited to go and give a mission in that town. We have no further record of the fruits of his preaching there than may be indirectly gathered from the letters addressed to him by the religious of the communities which he had visited, and from the eagerness with which, six years later, he was requested to return to the Bourbonnais.

After having followed in detail the carrying out of the perfidious plot by which Boudon's enemies worked his ruin in the minds of his superiors and friends, and especially in that of his bishop, we should have been glad to be able to specify in like manner the means by which God at last justified His servant's innocence and constrained all to see and acknowledge it. But, unfortunately, full particulars are wanting, and we cannot trace the sequence of events with the same clearness; partly, perhaps, because his vindication was pre-eminently the work of God, who in ways inscrutable to us can undo in a day, in an hour, the web which it has taken men months, and even years, to weave; we must not therefore be surprised if we cannot adequately account for its suddenness and completeness by any assignable causes. Still these are not altogether wanting, and two in particular may be mentioned as power-

fully helping to bring about this rapid revolution of opinion. The first was the change which took place in the minds of two persons who, in the early days of his archdeaconship, had been converted by his preaching to a life of piety, and had placed themselves under his direction. Subsequently they hearkened to the calumnies propagated against him, and with inexcusable credulity accepted them as truths; but this was not the sole injustice of which they were guilty, for their bitter tongues were specially instrumental in disseminating these falsehoods, the esteem in which they themselves were held serving greatly to accredit them. We cannot say what it was which ultimately opened their eyes. The behaviour of the saintly Archdeacon during those eight years that he lay under the ban of public reprobation must in itself, one may suppose, have gone far to shake their confidence. The contrast offered by his purity and holiness to the vices laid to his charge, the utter impossibility that a hypocrite, such as he was represented to be, should never betray his true character on any single occasion for all that long space of time and under so searching a trial, but should persevere in leading a life rather angelic than human, was certainly an enigma. Was it credible, moreover, that one without faith, without piety, without respect for all that is most sacred in religion, could write as he did and succeed in habitually feigning those sentiments of heroic love and devotion with which his works abound; expressed, too, as they were with such perfect nature, such inartificial simplicity, the evident overflowings of a spring of sanctity within the soul of him from whom they proceeded? They may probably have been led by these and the like considerations to a more impartial examination of the

accusations brought against him ; such an examination, calmly undertaken, could not fail to bring to light their utter groundlessness. Be this as it may, these persons in some way discovered the error into which they had been betrayed, and this discovery was followed by the deepest sorrow and shame for the wrong which they had done the saintly man. They remembered well, however, his generous nature, and how he, not only freely forgave injuries, but always seemed to forget them, imitating the perfection of our Heavenly Father, who, when we return to Him, keeps not our sins in remembrance, but casts them into the depths of the sea. If any one, indeed, could with confidence say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," it was Boudon. His former friends knew this, and so they came to throw themselves at his feet and beg for a pardon which they had received long before they asked for it. He took them again under his direction, and one of them, to whom Boudon ministered in his last moments, left his daughter, a widow, with a numerous family, to his protection, which, it need scarcely be added, never failed them. Although M. Bosguérard's manuscripts do not give his name, it is more than probable that this individual was M. de Berville, to whom allusion has already been made.

This retraction on the part of persons who enjoyed much consideration and respect in Evreux must naturally have had considerable effect, but it was speedily followed by one much more striking and convincing. The unhappy religious who, by his artfully composed libel, and owing to the great influence he gained over Mgr. de Maupas's mind, had greater share than any one in accomplishing Boudon's ruin,—this man, whose seemingly austere morals and whose high intellectual

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gifts had won for him general esteem and confidence, through a just judgment of God was permitted to fall into the very sin of which he had falsely accused the holy Archdeacon. By some means his iniquity was divulged; according to Collet, the partner of his guilt openly charged him with it. The wretched man thus saw himself despoiled of all those things which he had valued so highly as even to barter his soul to attain and keep them: high position, honour, consideration, public esteem,—all forfeited by a fault which God, indeed, can forgive, as He will all sin on sincere repentance, but which men never will condone in one of his holy calling and high profession. In one moment he sank from the proud elevation which he occupied in the world's eye into a depth of abasement and confusion from which it was hopeless ever to arise. Yet to him this state of humiliation became a source of blessing, for it brought him to himself, and moved him to contrition for his crimes. But into whose ear was he to pour the tale of his ignominy? He looked around him for one whose tender and large-hearted charity might give him that compassionate reception which sinners so earnestly crave, as did the prodigal the paternal embrace while crouching amongst the swine. He looked around, and thought of Boudon. He had confidence enough in the virtue of him whom he had so cruelly maligned and persecuted with untiring enmity for these eight years past, to believe that he of all men would receive him with the most loving pity and best assist him to make his peace with God.

To Boudon, then, he went, and laid bare before him all the blackness of his heart, all its base envy, which had urged him on to do that foul injury, all its worldly

ambition and greed of distinction, which, after betraying him into a course of injustice and falsehood, had been the prelude of his fall into the grievous offence which had brought such disgrace upon him. He offered to make the only reparation now in his power, and that was publicly to retract his calumnious accusations. But Boudon would not for a moment permit him to add thus to the humiliation which his recent sin had inflicted upon him, but energetically forbade every such exposure. Had he been one of his dearest friends—which Boudon, indeed, reckoned his enemies to be—he could not have behaved towards him with a tenderer compassion. When the wretched man first sought his presence Boudon hastened forward to meet him, and pressed him in his arms; he strove to close his mouth when, in the bitterness of his remorse, his traducer was pouring forth his avowal of all the wrongs he had done him; he cut short the details, and could even find ingenious excuses to palliate the enormity of offences which regarded himself alone. Then he heard the sinner's confession, and had the unspeakable happiness of being the minister of God's forgiveness to him after having so lovingly manifested his own. He fortified, he consoled and encouraged him, he directed him in the ways of penance, and continued to do so, for this repentant religious would have no other guide or counsellor but him who had so long been the object of his bitterest hatred, and ultimately, we are told, yielded up his last breath in his arms.

What Boudon did not permit this religious to do in any public manner, the penitent at once addressed himself to effect more privately. His very fall must, we may believe, have served to open Mgr. de Maupas's eyes,

for it was mainly his reliance on the virtue and integrity of this man which had blinded his better judgment. However this may be, he now knew that he had been deceived knowingly and maliciously, and the restoration of Boudon to his esteem speedily followed; of which he hastened to render him public testimony by reinstating him in his former position and authority; he appointed him also to preach before him from New Year's day to Septuagesima Sunday, 1674, and insisted upon his resuming habitually his place at his table. Mgr. de Maupas had contracted an immense debt towards Boudon, but it is clear that he did whatever lay in his power to acquit himself of his obligations in that respect by making all the compensation which was now possible; for, not contented with giving so many unmistakable marks of renewed confidence, he never refrained from humbly owning the error which he had committed and the weakness and credulity of which he had been guilty. On the other hand, he loudly extolled the admirable behaviour of his archdeacon under such heavy and protracted trials, and declared that, if he once had the misfortune to think that he could not speak too ill of him, much more was he now persuaded that he could not award him praise by any means commensurate with his merits.

We have probably lost many interesting particulars concerning the Bishop's reconciliation with Boudon, on account of the brief manner in which M. Bosguérard deals with the subject in his manuscripts, the chief and safest authority which we possess for all those incidents in the life of his friend which occurred during the period when he was so intimately connected with him. By the time M. Bosguérard had reached this point of his

narration, the fatal malady which terminated his days was making such rapid progress, that he hurried over the remainder of his work lest he should have to leave it incomplete.*

CHAPTER XV.

BOUDON RESUMES HIS WORK OF THE MISSIONS—HIS SUCCESS IN PREACHING, AND HIS VIEWS ON THAT SUBJECT.

THE sudden and unexpected return of Mgr. de Maupas to his pristine feelings of confidence and affection was an utter and irreparable defeat to the Archdeacon's enemies. They saw that all was lost, and that nothing remained for them to do but to acquiesce with a good grace and make the best of their situation. One thing they knew for certain: they had nothing to apprehend from the resentment of their late victim; they had not even cause to anticipate a frown, or so much as a cold look. The best they could do, therefore, was simply to follow the Bishop's lead and do as he did. Not that they had the generosity, or, rather, one might call it

* Collet adds some particulars not mentioned by M. Bosguérard, but the author of the *Vie Nouvelle* has not thought fit to adopt them, since he could not find a trace of them in any manuscript, not even in the one from which Collet professed to have borrowed them; at least not in the copy which the author saw. Collet says that an ecclesiastic of great merit took the pains to examine into the proofs of Boudon's imputed guilt, and was so satisfied of their futility that he laid the result of his investigation before Mgr. de Maupas, who was thereby powerfully moved to change his previous opinion. This circumstance has no improbability in it, but does not seem to be sufficiently attested.

the justice, to own, like him, their fault ; that would have been too much to expect from men of their sort. Besides, if Mgr. de Maupas was bound to acknowledge that he had been deceived and had been culpably credulous, to them would have fallen the harder task of confessing that they had striven to deceive and had been basely malicious. Henceforth, at any rate, Boudon had nothing to fear from their enmity. If hatred still rankled in their bosoms, they concealed it under the outward semblance of deference, and no longer ventured to offer any opposition to him in the discharge of his office, or to thwart him in any of his pious undertakings. But, in addition to these hitherto sworn foes, there was a large number of persons who had either been deluded and blinded, like their bishop, or who, like so many sheep, had gone the way the rest went. There is always a multitude of such men, who have no independent opinion of their own, but who take up with the view favoured by those who are regarded as leaders. The mass of these valueless judgments goes, however, to form what is called public opinion ; when the tide turns, this mass turns also, as a matter of course, and then a new and quite different public opinion is quickly created.

Public opinion, accordingly, was now all in favour of Boudon, as recently it had been all against him. This change in men's minds was palpably exhibited on the occasion of the first visitation which the Archdeacon made after his restoration to his former position. A short time before, news had reached him that in a great number of parishes the Curés, emboldened by what they believed to be the state of confirmed disgrace into which he had fallen, had determined to offer a united resistance to him in every exercise of his authority, and

even to refuse him on his appearance the reception due to his dignity. Boudon had resolved, in the strength of Divine grace, to meet this stubborn opposition with all humility and patience, but at the same time with the requisite firmness when it was question of defending the rights of the Church entrusted to his guardianship. But matters turned out far otherwise. The tidings of his restoration to the Bishop's favour having preceded him, the conspiracy was at once dissolved, and the very men who had been foremost in urging the rest to mutiny were now most eager in giving the Archdeacon every mark of consideration and exhibiting the greatest willingness to enter into his views. Many of the other Curés belonging to the class just described as always swimming with the stream, or such as had been actuated by the mere motive of doing what they thought would be agreeable to the Bishop, or of avoiding what might be disagreeable to him, naturally accommodated themselves with the utmost facility to the new order of things, and were only desirous to make amends for former rudeness by their assiduous attentions.

The spectacle offered by this sudden scene-shifting is certainly one calculated to move us to no small amount of contempt or, we might perhaps better say, excite our pity, for the meanness of poor human nature, but Boudon contemplated it with a sweet serenity, seeing in this happy change only the finger of God. "Messieurs les Curés of the town," he writes to Bosgué-rard, "exhort their parishioners to be present at our visitations, and they behave with all possible civility to us; certainly the manner in which all this takes place is a visible manifestation of the action of Divine Providence." Small indeed, however, is the record

which remains of Boudon's personal feelings with respect to the revolution which had taken place in his favour, and the tardy justice awarded to him. He received many felicitations on the occasion, but we possess but one specimen of what may have been the tenour of his replies. In this letter he begs the pious soul whom he is addressing to aid him in blessing, thanking, praising, and adoring Divine Providence for all Its dealings with him, whether as regards the past, the present, or the future. In short, concerning all that occurred at that time his letters are profoundly silent; whence we may conclude that he imposed a like reserve on his tongue. There is something very admirable in this silence. Not a word has he to say in what many would regard as his day of triumph, in striking contrast to the simple and touching frankness which he had previously displayed in the season of adversity, when he admitted his friends to the familiar contemplation of every detail of his abasement. He had called them to rejoice with him at the weight of the cross laid upon him, and now that it is lifted from his shoulders and nature is relieved of its burden, now that all are vying with each other in making amends to him for what he had suffered, he does not consider these things as worthy of their attention or regard. He does not invite them to participate in his joy and consolation.

Perhaps he could hardly be said to feel joy, as we commonly understand the word; he loved and valued the cross too much for that; yet he was not ungrateful to God, in whom alone he had confided, and he offered Him a splendid testimony of his gratitude in his work entitled, *Conduct of Divine Providence, and the Perpetual Adoration which is due to It*. Like holy Job, Boudon could bless the Lord for giving as well as for taking

away, but he was a stranger to that natural joy which deliverance from affliction and the return of prosperity excite in most men's bosoms, and had no response therefore to make to congratulations addressed to him in that spirit. Joy, however, he did experience, of another sort, but it was spiritual joy at the contemplation of God's wonderful mercies. "I have always leaned upon Thee," he exclaims in the pious invocation with which he commences the work in question; "Thou hast led me, and I have wanted for nothing. Many have said, on beholding the sharp and heavy afflictions with which Thou hast visited me, 'He hath hoped in God; let Him deliver him; he findeth no help in the Providence of God;' but Thou hast turned Thyself again to me, Thou hast restored me to life, Thou hast drawn me out of the deep pit. To many I appeared a monster of dereliction, but Thou hast mightily assisted me; Thou hast exalted Thy magnificence, Thou hast turned Thine eyes towards me, and hast comforted me. When I reflect on Thy care, so full of love, of goodness, and ineffable mercy, my spirit fails and faints away within me, my strength deserts me; on all sides I behold only an abyss of love in which I must fain plunge and lose myself."

One of the sweetest consolations which Boudon experienced during the eight years that his sphere of external activity was so greatly limited, was the leisure he enjoyed for meditation on the mysteries of the faith and on the obligations thence accruing. To his forced inaction, indeed, we are indebted for the larger portion of his devotional writings, which he could otherwise never have been able to find time to compose; and he himself was persuaded that Providence had so ordered events as thus to afford him the opportunity of accom-

plishing this task. The production of good books, which could preach where the writer could never make his voice heard, and years after his tongue had been silenced in the grave, was, as we have seen, a work on which Boudon set the highest value. Books he esteemed to be the most powerful of missionaries, but, as he never ascended the pulpit without previously raising his heart to God, begging the Holy Spirit to dictate to him all that he should say—this indeed being often the only preparation he was able to make—so also in the composition of his writings he never took a subject in hand, however important he might consider its treatment to be, unless he felt interiorly moved to do so. To one who, like him, had his eyes ever turned towards God and his heart ever open to court and receive the influence of His grace, its slightest whispers and its gentlest touches had, doubtless, become audible and sensible in a manner quite inconceivable to the common run of even good men, whose minds during the greater part of the day are much more alive to the impressions produced by surrounding objects and passing events than to the spiritual world, and who open the windows of their souls to receive divine illumination and listen for the inward voice of His Spirit only at stated times of the day, if so be they do anything of the sort save after a most imperfect fashion even during the seasons allotted to prayer, limiting themselves, in fact, but too often to a very inattentive repetition of a certain round of devotions. But prayer was Boudon's life, it was his very breath; his spiritual perceptions may, therefore, well be imagined to have been very fine and delicate. The choice between two works which to the eye of reason seem equally good is one which must peculiarly demand for its exercise that

exceeding sensitiveness to the action of grace to which we here allude; and we gather from observations in Boudon's letters that in such selection he never acted from his own natural lights, but always from God's providential guidance or inward movement.

Besides a number of smaller treatises, which his devotion to the holy mysteries of the faith and to the Blessed Mother of God, or his desire to reform certain abuses and animate souls in the exercise of various pious practices, prompted him to put forth at this period, he published successively several longer works, which cause him to be to this day ranked amongst those ascetical writers who have shown most consummate knowledge of the interior life. Among these remarkable books *The Reign of God in Mental Prayer* may be named as holding the foremost rank.

Boudon took immediate advantage of his altered position to resume the work to which his zeal had always so specially attracted him, that of the missions. Chartres was the scene of the first he now gave. His close intimacy with the Abbé de Levis had often drawn his steps in that direction, and, up to the period of his persecutions, he had never visited that town without embracing the opportunity of preaching the word of God both in the parish churches and in the religious houses. The rich fruits which had resulted from his missions in that diocese had made it peculiarly dear to him, and this attachment had been much increased by the consolation and aid he had received during his trials from its heavenly patroness, Notre Dame de Chartres. Gratitude for these benefits made him feel that he never could labour with too much ardour for the glory of God in a place where his Holy Mother had graciously hearkened to his petitions and accorded

him such merciful support in his afflictions. And so he went first to Chartres. But soon he had to take more distant journeys. Moulins had not forgotten the mission he had given there when he was in the midst of his troubles, and he was earnestly requested to return. In compliance with this desire he set out in the spring of 1678, but he was a long time on his road, which, as we learn from an itinerary for which we are indebted to a nun of the Visitation, was more circuitous than on previous occasions. He passed through the Orleanais and the Nivernais, stopped at Châtillon sur Loire to assist at the installation of a house of Benedictine nuns of the Blessed Sacrament, and seems to have spent also some days near Nevers, at the request of the Sisters of Charity established in that place. The eager desire which was felt on all sides to secure even a passing visit from him, along the line of his progress, and which it was often impossible for him to disappoint, together with the harvest of good works which attended his ministrations everywhere, almost always led to a more prolonged absence than he had contemplated, until his visitations called him back to Evreux. On his return journey in the October of this year he passed by Bourges, where the Nuns of the Visitation rejoiced to profit by his presence for a few days. The next summer was devoted to Poitou, the Limousin, and the Bordelais. He made some stay in the capitals of all these provinces, and here again it is to the religious of the convents which he edified by his preaching we owe a knowledge of these journeys. Their letters, which have been preserved, are most touching memorials of their gratitude to this saintly man and of the spiritual joy and unction which he seemed to leave as a legacy among all who had the

blessing of hearing him, but especially to those spouses of Jesus who were always and everywhere the objects of his peculiar care and tenderest sympathy.

He appears to have had particular success at Bordeaux, where the principal families of the place contended for the honour of receiving and lodging him. He found himself obliged to yield to the solicitations of the good M. de Chabannes, President of the Parliament, seconded by his numerous and virtuous family, and to take up his abode under his roof. Many signal conversions were the result of his mission at Bordeaux, and yet his preaching was remarkable for its simplicity; a simplicity, however, be it observed, which is not to be confounded with the superficial or the commonplace, but such as we may imagine distinguished the first preachers of the Gospel. This, indeed, was the judgment of a Jesuit Father at Bordeaux, whose talents for pulpit oratory had won him a considerable reputation in the place, and who went to hear Boudon in order to discover what might be the attraction which drew such crowds to listen to him. Greatly struck with the sermon, the Father publicly declared, on leaving the church, that the touching and truly apostolic simplicity of his style was a thousand times better calculated to bring sinners back to God than all the flights of eloquence of your fashionable preachers.

Boudon's zeal for souls was individual. Such is ever the zeal of saints. They know the value of one soul, purchased at no less a price than the Blood of a God, and dear beyond expression to His Sacred Heart. It did not require numbers to make him think it worth while to exert his full powers. Thus he would travel as far, and take as much trouble, for the salvation of one soul as for that of many; nay more: he would

undertake long and fatiguing journeys for the purpose of merely consoling and fortifying one single suffering or perplexed soul. Thus we find him, on his return from his missionary work in the south of France, setting off for Caen at the earnest request of a lady of that place who was labouring under some spiritual affliction. Indeed it was not necessary always even to put forth a request; it was enough for him to know of a need which he could supply, or of a pain which he might relieve, for him to hasten to the spot at much personal inconvenience; and it often occurred that simple religious who in their letters to him had made only some slight allusion to their spiritual trials would, to their exceeding surprise and consolation, see him after a while make his appearance at their convent, regardless of all the fatigues incident to a long journey over roads the badness of which we at the present day are little able to conceive, all for the purpose of restoring peace and tranquillity to one disturbed soul. Nay, sometimes he had received no direct intimation of the need experienced, but seemed to know it by some interior supernatural movement, instances of which have been already related.

Boudon was at Paris, on a mission of charity such as above described, when he heard of the death of the prelate whom he had never himself ceased to love, and who for six years had been striving by public marks of esteem and private testimonies of affection to compensate for the wrong he had previously done him and the afflictions he had caused him. Mgr. de Maupas, desirous to stimulate the first efforts of newly ordained priests, loved to be present at their earliest sermons, that he might encourage them by his counsels and approbation. A young priest having to make his first

pulpit essay at the village of Melleville, which was at a short distance from Evreux, the Bishop drove thither with this object, and met with a fatal accident, on his return, owing to the horses running away and upsetting the carriage. The injuries he received were so great that he was with difficulty conveyed to the episcopal palace, where he expired on the 12th of August, 1680. Boudon was in the act of descending from the pulpit in the Convent of the Visitation, in the Faubourg St. Jacques, when the sad news was announced to him. His grief was so poignant that he was fain at once to communicate its cause to the Sisters. The nuns of the Visitation had peculiar reasons to share his regret, for the prelate whom the Church had just lost had in his youth possessed the affection of their holy founder, St. Francis de Sales, and had not only laboured indefatigably to promote his canonisation, but had always shown particular favour to his spiritual daughters. They accordingly begged Boudon to deliver a panegyric on the departed bishop in their church. It was singular that such an office should devolve upon him, but he had no difficulty in complying with the request. He had only to give free and spontaneous utterance to the sentiments of veneration and love which he cherished for Mgr. de Maupas, and which were never in the least impaired even at the time when he was experiencing the most cruel treatment at his hands. With equal facility and equal sincerity he could have preached that funeral sermon, if the Bishop had met his end before his eyes had been opened to the injustice of which he was guilty. Indeed, no one perhaps was better fitted to eulogise the late bishop than was Boudon. The one passage in Mgr. de Maupas's life, which others might have viewed as a serious blemish, calculated to detract

from the enthusiasm of their praise, existed not for him. His practice, not only of making every excuse for his enemies, but even of regarding them as his best friends, expunged as it were from his remembrance all that was personal to himself. Now, apart from this page of Mgr. de Maupas's history, what there is to be told of him has almost a saintly air about it. No doubt he was an eminently good man, but it takes a great deal to make a saint. The greatest number of holy actions suffices not for this; there must be a perfection following on the complete subdual of nature which may be said, morally, to preclude the possibility of painful inconsistencies of conduct and the sway of unreasoning and obstinate prejudice, such as marked the behaviour of the Bishop of Evreux during the eight years of his estrangement from his holy archdeacon.

Difficulties connected with the *Regale*, and other delays kept the see of Evreux vacant until the year 1682, when Jacques Potier de Novion was appointed to it.* This prelate seems to have inherited his predecessor's regard for Boudon, which not a shade ever came to obscure. He made him eat habitually at his table, consulted him on all occasions, gave his episcopal encouragement and support to all his pious undertakings, and was often heard to declare that it was to the Archdeacon's wisdom and holy example that was due the regular order which he found to prevail among the clergy, as well as the good dispositions of the people of the diocese.

For ten years Boudon continued his apostolic labours, in the course of which period he visited Brittany, Lor-

* He was the son of the first President of the Parliament of Paris, and was raised to the see of Sisteron in 1674, whence he was translated to Evreux. He died in 1709.

raine, and Flanders several times, returning only in the autumns to Evreux for his visitation rounds ; after which, instead of allowing himself a brief repose during the most rigorous season of the year, he availed himself of the interval which winter afforded to make journeys to Chartres, Caen, and Paris, where numerous religious communities, in which he had long taken a charitable interest, were constantly soliciting his counsels and his presence. If we are to judge from his letters, it was Flanders which had the largest share in the benefit of his summer missions, and which yielded the most abundant fruit. He made long stations at all the principal towns in both the French and Spanish portions, and it would appear that there was not one religious community in the whole country which did not enjoy the privilege of his ministrations, not a single ecclesiastic of merit, or lay person solicitous about his soul's welfare, who failed to have recourse to his lights and guidance. Moreover, it was not a mere transient impression which he made in those parts ; the effect produced was durable, and the memory of his words and of his example powerful enough to fix in the paths of virtue and godliness numbers whom he had been the instrument of recalling from sinful and worldly courses. Several ladies of very distinguished rank, who had learned to know him on his first mission, and notably the Princesses de Chimai and Vaudemont and the Duchesse d'Arenberg became and continued to be his most faithful co-operators in all good works. They warmly interested themselves in the publication of his books, which they caused to be reprinted several times, both in Flemish and French, at Lille and at Brussels, and distributed with the most liberal profusion. His letters incidentally prove the respect and veneration which

these ladies never ceased to entertain for him, by their allusion to the many services of this kind which they persevered in rendering him.

Mention has already been frequently made of Boudon's great success as a preacher, a success which he did not owe to what is usually styled eloquence, although a clear, sonorous, and peculiarly persuasive voice, and that perfect agreement of manner and gesture with the sentiments expressed, which adds so much to the effect of any public speaking, made his delivery very pleasing. All was, however, natural and spontaneous, even as were the words which flowed with so much facility from his lips ; for nothing can be more certain than that his sermons were unstudied and unprepared ; entirely so, in the ordinary sense of those terms. The very number of them—for well-nigh three parts of his active life may be said to have been spent in preaching—would preclude the idea of any laboured preparation, but we have additional proof, which, although of a negative character, is very conclusive. He left all his manuscripts to his friend Bosguérard, and, in a letter addressed to him some time before his death, acquainting him with his intention, he inclosed a detailed list of these papers accompanied with a reference to their contents. Now, no original, whether copy or notes of any sermon, is to be found in this list, which certainly would be the case had such existed. The list was transferred by Bosguérard into his own written narrative, where he asserts that the papers were deposited by him in the Great Seminary of Evreux. Had the sermons been subsequently lost, their titles would still have been thus preserved to us. Nothing of the kind remains, except a panegyric on a Canon of Evreux pronounced by Boudon in the cathedral. It is written out,

without corrections or erasures, in his own hand and couched in his own ordinary style, which was doubtless always similar whether he were preaching or writing. When speaking of God, Boudon could give free scope to his feelings, but probably in undertaking to laud a creature, however excellent, he felt that some previous consideration was required, and some selection needful. To this we probably owe this solitary exception of a written discourse from his pen. But if Boudon made no mental preparation or study before addressing a congregation, whether it were great or small, or whatever might be the class to which his hearers belonged, he made a preparation of heart. He abandoned himself entirely to God to inspire him with what it was His will he should say ; and thus, after choosing his subject and meditating upon it, he never concerned himself as to its treatment, trusting to divine assistance to supply him with both abundance of thoughts and facility of enunciating them ; and these never failed him. It must be remembered, however, that Boudon had a well-stored mind, a thorough acquaintance with Scripture and theology, and a marvellously retentive memory, so that he possessed the materials for speaking readily on any religious subject. Hence he was not presumptuously asking for a miracle when begging the Spirit of God to suggest what his lips should utter, but he was exercising an act of faith and trust, by placing those materials at the disposal of his heavenly teacher and prompter, without leaning on his own powers to arrange, select, or combine what might approve itself to his understanding as most effective. It does not follow, therefore, that to persons who were not, so to say, masters of the subject they had to treat, and especially to beginners, he would have counselled a total neglect of

preparation and previous arrangement, although to each and all he would have recommended that entire dependence on divine aid and interior abandonment to the movement of the Holy Spirit which is incompatible with self-reliance. Besides, letters of his on this subject to M. Bosguérard leave no doubt of his views on this question.

When we say that Boudon did not owe his success to eloquence, we do not mean that he had not an eloquence of his own. But this did not consist in any rhetorical display, nor did he avail himself of those arts of language which are usually employed by orators to move, excite, or affect their audience. Nevertheless he *did* move his hearers profoundly, but chiefly because he himself was deeply moved, and wholly possessed by the all-importance of the truths he was inculcating. He had the eloquence which comes from the heart, rather than from the head, and so it went to the heart of his hearers and did not merely please their imagination. His sermons were, no doubt, counterparts of his writings, which owe nothing to style, but move the reader from that spiritual unction and plenitude of divine love with which they overflow. That the resemblance was striking we may gather from the fact that a lady who had been reading Boudon's *Dieu Seul*, happening to hear him preach in some remote province of France, recognised at once the author of the pious treatise which had made so strong an impression upon her. Delighted on inquiry to find that she was not mistaken, she immediately went to beg him to undertake her direction, and ever afterwards corresponded with him concerning the affairs of her soul. Boudon prized talent and mere erudition very little in those who give themselves to the ministry of the Word; the

former, indeed, he thought often became a snare to self-love, while the latter was apt to dry up the heart by the conceit of learning which it produced and the credit it entailed. Not that he undervalued any great or good gift, either natural or acquired, but he dreaded its over-cultivation at the expense of better things, and, above all, he feared the self-confidence which it frequently fosters in its possessors. The true source of the good effects of preaching was, he esteemed, to be found in the preacher's personal holiness and spirit of abnegation. The picture which he draws, in his work entitled *La Sainteté Ecclesiastique*, of the perfection required by the vocation to the ministry might discourage ordinary souls, while it is well calculated to animate the fervent and fill them with a holy emulation. In writing it he was unconsciously portraying himself. It was in a state of self-annihilation at the foot of the Crucifix that he would have priests imbibe all the eloquence and all the science of their sermons. There he would have them learn to forget themselves and all devices for pleasing men, and derive from meditation on the interests of God alone that apostolic simplicity and priceless unction to which it has pleased Him to attach such marvellous potency. Where there was less of nature, he said, there was more of God; where there was more of nature there was less of God. The moment that ever so little entrance is given to motives of human respect or self-interest, this mixture is enough to mar the work of a mission, and check the highest effects of the Spirit of grace. The devil will gain a footing; for it is inconceivable what a hold the least imperfection gives him. He entrenches himself therein, and works powerfully against the order of God, resisting and hindering good. But a man of

grace, he says, a missionary who knows only Jesus, and Jesus crucified, makes all hell tremble, for all hell fears God, and he is full of God. Convinced as he was that the plenitude of the Holy Spirit is a necessary disposition for the preaching of the word, and that the kingdom of God can be established only by the Spirit of Jesus, he believed that all the science a man could possibly possess and all the eloquence with which he might be gifted would, in the absence of this spirit, effect nothing in God's sight. A man full of himself and of his own human spirit cannot receive this spirit of truth, and he is therefore powerless to convey it to others. After listening to one of these preachers, he observes, people leaving the church will be heard talking of him, not of the Saviour. They will say that he has preached with talent and eloquence, that nothing could have been more admirable than his sermon, but few think and few talk of changing their lives. In God's sight things are very different to what they are in those of men; one man will have been praised and run after and had a great reputation, who, because he had little of the Spirit of God in him, will have produced little or no fruit in his hearers, while another, who sought not his own but God's glory, and who had, perhaps, few to hear him, to these few would have proved the minister of abundant grace.

So it was, then, that Boudon, regarding himself as a mere instrument in God's hands and his preaching as all the more profitable to others in proportion as he had the less share in what he said, could talk of himself and the success of his sermons with the most perfect frankness and simplicity; he could talk of them even as we may imagine the blessed in heaven may speak of their own glory, which is now so wholly identified in their

eyes with that of God, and so completely referred to Him, that the praise which accrues to them is received by them as the praise of God, who is all in all. God Alone: in that thought Boudon lived. He saw God alone in the conversions he made, in the marks of veneration shown to him, and even in the affectionate care taken of him. The sight of all this, while it deepened his own humble perception of his personal nothingness and feebleness, threw him into transports of admiration which he could not conceal. Nay, he looked about him for souls who would join in thanking God for the special and wonderful grace vouchsafed to him, and for the fruit it produced to His glory. "It is a marvellous thing," we find him writing to M^{me}. de Rouves, "and one which testifies to a pure Providence of God, that people flock eagerly to hear our discourses, and, though they are framed with our usual simplicity, it pleases our Lord to extract His glory from our nothingness; learned men come, Superiors of Orders come, there is even a very celebrated preacher, Provincial of his Order, who brings every one whom he can influence. Going to celebrate Mass the day before yesterday for a community, I was surprised to find the church full, notwithstanding the early hour, and persons of rank and high position amongst them, all come to hear us speak of our good Master and our good Mistress." And then he breaks forth in rapturous praises of the sweetness of Divine Providence in his regard, causing him to be received in places which he has visited with the most astonishing charity; illustrious individuals, who had never before seen him, insisting upon lodging him, as well as on paying the expenses of his journey. His reception reminds him of his first years at Evreux; whereupon, remembering

the years that followed, he says that there is nothing better than privation, and that these latter years were the best. He can thank God for both, however, and, above all, He loves best that which is God's will. He adores the judgments of God, and all His ways, without seeking in the least to penetrate the reasons of them. "Oh, how I love them," he exclaims, "without understanding them! Oh, how I desire to adore them without knowing them! Oh, how I will to love them even should they tend to crush and destroy me!"

While rejoicing, then, in the success of the word preached by his mouth, we may rest assured, from what we have seen of his sentiments while under persecution, that he would have returned equal thanks to God, had it fallen only on cold and indifferent ears. He even considered that the excessive sorrow which some preachers experience when their sermons do not produce the anticipated effect is a secret temptation of self-love. Had these priests entered into the spirit of their great Model, such mortification could have found no place in them; for Jesus willed that the fruits of His divine mission should not appear whilst He abode on earth, in order to teach His followers to sacrifice that natural complacency which they are disposed to harbour at the sight of the good issue of their labours, a complacency which weakens the merit of those labours, and thus diminishes their future reward.

CHAPTER XVI.

BOUDON'S VISIT TO BAVARIA.

IN the year 1685 Boudon, at the earnest solicitation of the Duchess of Bavaria, Mauricette Febronie de Bouillon, consented to pay a visit to her court. She had never forgotten the care he had taken of her soul in her early youth and up to the period of her marriage. Her elder sister, the Princess Louise, had remained single; she was a person of deep interior piety, and, after passing her whole life in complete detachment from the world and in the assiduous practice of works of charity and devotion, she died in the spring of 1683, fortified and consoled in her last passage by him who had been her constant guide in those strait ways of perfection which she had so generously and perseveringly trodden. This circumstance, no doubt, had greatly contributed to increase the desire of the sorrowing sister to see and confer with Boudon; and, moreover, according to Collet, she was also suffering from spiritual trials, in which she confidently looked to her old and revered director for help. The fame of his successful missions in Flanders and in portions of Germany bordering on France must have further inspired her with the wish to procure similar advantages for her own subjects. In yielding to her appeal Boudon's accustomed humility would have led him to conceal

the object and motives of his journey. He would fain have avoided all the honour which was sure to accrue to himself from the distinguished marks of confidence and esteem manifested by the Duchess of Bavaria, but in this attempt he was not successful, and it was hardly possible that he should be so. Some, of course, knew both why and where he was going, and very few can keep a secret, especially when the world is curious on the subject; and the world is very inquisitive about matters of this kind, and very fond of talking about them and making the most of them. The world, in fact, is alternately in the humour to criticise, depreciate, and condemn without compunction, or to exalt, magnify, and extol without measure. As regarded the Archdeacon of Evreux, who had had ample experience of the former temper, it was now in the latter humour. Accordingly, his visit to the court of Bavaria was a matter of much interest and a topic of general conversation. Finding, in spite of his desire to live always a hidden life in Jesus, that the matter was divulged in France, Boudon, as usual, saw therein the will of Divine Providence, as he tells the Superioress of the Ursuline convent of Evreux in a letter which has been fortunately preserved, giving a full and detailed account of his journey and of his stay in Bavaria. Since, he said, it had pleased God to give publicity to his journey, he was incited thereby to speak of it himself. It is to this governing motive of his life, his devotion to the will of God signified by His Providence, that we owe this interesting letter. He evidently intended that it should be communicated to others, for he prays that it may be of the number of those of which St. Augustine speaks, which shed abroad the fire of divine love which Jesus came to

enkindle on earth, and spread the good odour of this amiable Saviour, and that every word of it may conduce to render to Him the glory which is His due.

Boudon reached Metz a few days before the feast of Pentecost, and lodged with a Counsellor of the Parliament whose charity, he said, had been long known to him. He had made his acquaintance, it would appear, during his missions, and had since met him at Paris. He did not tarry long in that city, but during his brief stay he visited several religious communities; the Carmelites of St. Teresa's reform, the Sisters of St. Clare of the strict observance, the Nuns of the Visitation, and the Daughters of the Propagation of the Faith. With all these he had the grace, he said, to speak of the Kingdom of God and to strive, in His divine power, to inflame himself with His holy and pure love; but it was when visiting the convent of the Dominicans that he enjoyed a special and highly valued favour. These nuns possessed the relics of St. Henry and of St. Cunegunda, his consort; and, having read with great edification Boudon's work, *Dieu Seul*, and knowing also that, his name being Henri, the holy Emperor was one of his special patrons, these religious, not only exposed the head of the Saint for his veneration, but allowed him to take it into his hands. The admirable devotion of St. Henry to the Blessed Mother of God, in honour of whom it was his custom, on arriving in Rome, to spend the whole night in prayer in the church of Santa Maria Maggiore, made him especially dear to Boudon, who also regarded it as a token of the peculiar favour of Divine Providence that, at the very outset of his journey, he should have the opportunity of honouring this saint, who had been Emperor of Germany and previously Duke of Bavaria,

the very country to which his steps were bound. Boudon arrived at Nancy on the vigil of Pentecost, and was not able to remain longer than the festival day, because he was forced to take advantage of the public conveyance to Strasburg, which started on the Monday. He went to celebrate Mass at a chapel and place of pilgrimage dedicated to Notre Dame de Bon Secours, where he gave a candle to burn before her image, and spent the afternoon with the nuns of Notre Dame du Refuge, to whom he had more than once given retreats on former visits and the life of whose holy foundress, Elisabeth de Ranfaing, called in religion Elisabeth de la Croix de Jésus,* he had lately written in pursuance of a request made some years previously by her spiritual daughters.

On reaching Strasburg he was obliged in the first instance to take up his quarters in an hotel kept by a Lutheran, but the Jesuit Fathers, who presided over the Diocesan Seminary, having heard of his arrival, insisted on receiving him as their guest. The last four years, thanks mainly to the exertions of the sons of St. Ignatius, had caused a happy change in the state of the city of Strasburg, which, with its glorious cathedral, had been in the hands of the Lutherans for a hundred and fifty-two years, when it surrendered to Louis XIV. on the 30th September, 1681. The Jesuits, who had no church of their own, performed all their public exercises in the cathedral, where they preached two sermons on Sundays, one in French, the other in German, expounding Catholic doctrine and treating the controverted points with great ability and success.

* This biography is entitled *Triomphe de la Croix*, and the life of this holy woman was, in fact, a series of the most marvellous crosses.

“The Lutherans,” says Boudon, “marvel at learning the truths of our faith; for their misfortune is to be continually imposed upon and taught to believe that we are in frightful error; and this gives them a horror of our holy religion. Every day converts are made, and you can hardly conceive how God blesses the labours of the Jesuit Fathers; truly may one say that the finger of God is here.” On the day he left the city nine persons were to make their profession of the Catholic faith, and not a few conversions had been made even amongst the false pastors; the faithful having lately enjoyed the consolation of seeing the Father Rector ascend his pulpit having on either side of him a Lutheran pastor who had come to make a public abjuration of his errors. Numbers of the Protestant soldiers had been reunited to the Church, some of their leaders not contenting themselves with a public renunciation of heresy, but addressing those present in terms so moving as to draw tears from the eyes of the Catholic officers in the sight of all the people. Boudon was much touched at observing the zeal displayed by the Catholic soldiery when any of their comrades or officers were to make their abjuration. Bands of them would come to be present on these occasions, and the newly converted would be accompanied to and from the church with military pomp and lighted torches, while the bells of the cathedral rang forth a joyful peal; everything, in short, being done to make the ceremony one of festal joy.

Boudon visited, while at Strasburg, a convent of Visitandines who had come thither from Franche Comté. Their superioress was at that time a princess of the house of Baden, whose piety as well as her contempt of the world he highly commends, as he also

does the spirit of her community, with whom, owing to their French origin, he was able freely to communicate; the superioress having summoned them all to the grate, that they might have the advantage of hearing as well as conversing with him. Boudon would willingly have lingered for a short time in a place of so much interest to him, but, the carriage which the Duke and Duchess had sent for him having now arrived, he considered it imperative to proceed forthwith on his journey. This carriage is evidently a considerable cross to him, as it continued to be during his sojourn in Bavaria. It was only with much confusion that he could speak of being conveyed in this manner, but, unfortunately, he said, his strength was not equal to travelling on foot, as would have been suitable for a poor priest like himself. Their Highnesses, he added, wished even to send him back to Paris in a similar manner, but this he took care to decline, as public conveyances were not wanting in France. Apparently they were scarce in Germany at that period, which left him no alternative but either to proceed on foot or to accept the ducal vehicle; so he was fain to resign himself to this mortification.

After leaving Strasburg, Boudon met with what to him was a novelty, and that of a most distressing kind. The road between that city and Ulm lay through a country wholly Lutheran, so that he could no longer daily celebrate the Divine Mysteries. To behold a great country entirely abandoned to heresy, its churches, many of which he says were very beautiful, in the possession of heretics, the clergy houses occupied by false pastors with their wives and children, and ecclesiastical property all passed into the hands of the secular powers, was indeed a sad spectacle; but he does not

fail to recognise the cause, and calls on his correspondent to join with him in adoring the judgments of God. It was the relaxation of manners of both clergy and religious, with the abuses prevalent amongst them, and, as an unfailing consequence, popular license and immorality, which furnished the miserable Luther with a pretext for raising the cry of reform and inveighing against Holy Church. From abuses this heresiarch passed on to assailing true doctrine, and then all was ruined. The people had forsaken God by giving themselves up to sin, and God justly abandoned them. Clergy and religious were leading disorderly or self-indulgent lives ; they wasted their goods in foolish expenditure, and God took away from them goods, houses, churches, and delivered them up to their enemies.

Boudon remarks on the preservation of many Catholic usages among this Lutheran population ; a circumstance which to this day may be noticed in parts of Germany, although all that was signified by these observances has utterly vanished. The Lutherans, in fact, generally speaking, exhibited from the first more tolerance for the externals of the faith and for Catholic ceremonial and observances than did the Calvinists ; for instance, they did not make the same fanatical raid on holy images, nor had they that mortal aversion to bells which distinguished most of the other Protestant sectaries. The church bells were ringing continually on festal days, to call the people to prayer, and even on the week-days they rang three several times, as they had been wont to do for the *Angelus*, as well as at the hour of Vespers, which in some places were still sung, though in the vulgar tongue, the Latin, however, being still retained in others. The wayside crosses had been spared, and Boudon observed people saluting them with much

reverence as they passed by. Images of our Lord, and even of the Blessed Virgin, were also commonly to be found in private dwellings. Doubtless many truths of the faith and, still more, many pious practices in which it was embodied, lingered at that time to a great extent among the common people. Boudon praises their good natural dispositions, and says that they gave a very kind reception to any members of the religious mendicant orders who happened to pass through their country ; and even in the inns he observed an inclination to hold in esteem such ecclesiastics and religious as gave evidence of piety and a mortified spirit.

It may be worth mentioning that he takes notice of the extreme cleanliness and neatness of the Lutheran towns. Nothing, he said, could be more agreeable, attractive, and airy than their houses ; and what surprised him most was to find the same attention to comfort even in the villages, where the rooms were clean and well wainscoted, a thing which he confesses to be rare in France, but in these parts very common, notwithstanding the additional expense. An inference has been often drawn by Protestants in their own favour from the alleged superiority in material well-being, comfort, and prosperity of Protestant over Catholic districts on the Continent, a question into which we shall not attempt to enter :* we allude to the subject only to show that Boudon, while admitting the fact in this particular instance and so far as his experience went, saw no difficulty in the matter, nor anything which called for either excuse or explanation. His remark thereupon is characteristic of him. " See," he says, " how God treats men who are opposed to Him. He gives them for their portion the enjoyments of life and

* The subject is discussed in Bellingham's *Social Aspects of Catholicism and Protestantism*, chap. ii. (Paul & Co.)

the goods of earth. Oh, what a misfortune it is to have our ease in this world !”

Arriving at Ulm on the vigil of Corpus Christi, he was overjoyed at learning that there was a religious house in the town. It belonged to the Teutonic Order, and thither he repaired at once in order to prepare to celebrate Mass on the morrow, a blessing of which he had been deprived for several days. He found, however, that, the reformed calendar not having yet been adopted in those parts,* the religious felt it needful to conform to the custom of the country, and were therefore not preparing to keep the festival until eight days later. Boudon, so devout to the holy angels, mentions that their church was dedicated to St. Michael, which occasioned him much joy, coupled as it was with the reflection that God had always preserved to Himself one altar in this heretical city on which the Adorable Sacrifice had never ceased to be offered. On the morrow he had the satisfaction once more of finding himself amidst a Catholic population, whose zeal and piety he highly commends; and on the following day he reached the village of Tirkheim, where the Duke and Duchess of Bavaria resided during the summer months, and where they were now in expectation of his arrival.

Boudon had a most friendly and gracious welcome

* Pope Gregory XIII. reformed the Julian calendar in 1582, in concert with all the Catholic sovereigns, and published a new one, the same which, under the name of the Gregorian calendar, is now received throughout all the European states with the exception of Russia. Although this change had become absolutely necessary, yet, because it emanated from the Pope, Protestants refused at first to agree to it, and it was not until the year 1700 that the body of German Protestants received it, with some slight difference, however, in the mode of determining Easter.

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from them. He speaks of the Duke as a prince on very distinguished merit, and of both of them as possessing excellent natural endowments; but "all these things," he adds, "touch me little." It was the fruits of grace he observed in them which filled his heart with joy. Still in the flower of their years, instead of indulging in the pomps and pleasures upon which so many of the rich and great waste their time and means, this worthy and pious couple devoted themselves to promoting the honour of God and the good of their people. They had magnificently adorned the parish church of the village of Tirkheim, and had constructed seven altars in it, at which the indulgences of the Roman stations could be gained. The Duke had also built a chapel in the village in honour of St. Bennon, Bishop, whom Bavaria claimed as a patron, and on her return from a pilgrimage to Loreto, the Duchess had caused one to be erected in honour of the Mother of God after the pattern of the Holy House; it was her purpose also to build adjoining to it a monastery for Capuchins, to whom the care of this chapel was to be committed, as well as the instruction of the poor country people. She, moreover, intended to build a church for these religious, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. This little village possessed yet another chapel, which was dedicated to St. Leonard. Every day the Litanies of Our Lady were recited in the Loreto Chapel, their Highnesses never failing to be present. They assisted daily at several Masses, and were also present at all the offices of the Church, whether on festivals or week-days. Truly, said Boudon, theirs might be called a saintly court. The benevolent care which this princely couple took of the poor, the sick, the suffering, and

even of wayfarers, for whom lodging was charitably provided, equalled their piety, and made them the objects of general esteem and love. Boudon notices an instance of their humility and reverence in the house of God, apparently singular among sovereign princes in those days, in that they contented themselves with a bench in the nave of the church instead of claiming seats in the choir. The general demeanour of the faithful greatly edified him; the women and men were separated, and even the children were quiet and attentive. There was none of that talking and indecorous behaviour to which he so frequently alludes with the deepest pain in his own country. In all respects, indeed, the piety of these Bavarian peasants seemed much to surpass what was usual in French villages, and he speaks of shedding tears of joy on beholding the crowds which approached the altar on festival days to receive Holy Communion. During Mass the church would be one blaze of light, from the number of candles which these good people brought, and he not seldom noticed amongst them worshippers with their arms extended in the form of a cross, who continued praying in that attitude for a length of time; an act of devotion which to this day may be witnessed in Belgium and parts of Germany.

Devotion to our Lady, he observed, was most fervent among all classes throughout Catholic Germany, especially devotion to her Immaculate Conception; and it pleased God to reward this love and zeal for His Blessed Mother by signal supernatural graces. The Father Provincial of the Augustinians told him, when at Munich, that they had scarcely a house in the province in which God did not perform miracles in her favour. In all the universities of Germany the doctors

were bound to maintain her Immaculate Conception, as, indeed, was also the case in that of Paris, and, he believed, in the principal Spanish universities. In truth, he adds, the sentiment of well-nigh the whole Church goes with this belief. It was an exceeding joy to this devoted champion of Mary's most glorious privilege to see so many churches dedicated to her under this title, in particular that of the Electoral palace, as well as the Duke's palace at Munich, and to find the Canons of Munich saying the office of her Conception every Saturday, except when necessarily superseded by another. God in His Providence, he said, was moving the faithful in all lands to glorify His Blessed Mother in her Immaculate Conception, and this filled him with a consolation quite indescribable, taking as he did a million times more interest in whatever concerned her honour than in anything which regarded himself personally.

The love of making pilgrimages to holy places was strongly developed in Boudon. "It is a very holy practice of piety," we find him writing to M. Bosgué-
rard, "a practice which heretics, who are enemies of all true piety, have treated as mummery, *velut otiosum ac inimicum*, something idle and pernicious. This is, as your Ritual says, because they are animated by the malignant spirit; nevertheless, it ought to be kept up in the spirit of the Church, which is the Spirit of God."* Holy pilgrimages are a Catholic instinct, as we may gather from the attraction which the devotion has always possessed for saints, and, we must add, for the mass of the faithful, particularly the poor; for the people's simple docility to the voice of the teaching Church imparts to them a species of passive infal-

* Letter ccxxvi.

libility. The Spirit of God, who dwells in the mystical Body of Christ, sways and turns and draws it by His invisible influence; when His breath goes forth the heart of the people is moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.* Thus saints and the body of the faithful—not the great, the rich, nor the learned, as such, but those whom we habitually call *the people*—best reflect the mind of the Spirit in their devotional leanings and attractions. Boudon, whose life was hidden with Christ in God, had no taste, curiosity, affection, or admiration for anything which belongs to earth. Thus, for instance, he owns to having seen nothing save the outside of the Elector's fine palace at Munich; for, not only did he consider that persons dedicated as he was to God had other things to engage their attention, but he regarded whatever was most splendid in this visible world, whether of nature or of art, as utterly contemptible and a mere nothing when compared to the wonders which exist in the interior world of grace. He contented himself, therefore, with seeing the chapel, and that, it would appear, not so much for the sake of its beauty as for the numerous and invaluable relics which it contained. Whatever spoke to him of the Fatherland and of its glorious inmates was worth turning aside to behold, just as the ordinary traveller leaves his road to contemplate the scene of famous deeds or to visit the birthplace of some great man, or pauses to gaze on some lovely prospect. But chiefly he delighted in visiting the sanctuaries of our Blessed Lady, and it was his particular desire to go and pay his homage to the Queen of angels and of men at one of her most ancient and celebrated shrines, that of Cetting in Bavaria. Its distance might

* Isaias vii. 2.

have presented a considerable difficulty, had not the Duchess been moved to propose that he should make this pilgrimage, which she knew would be so consonant with his wishes, offering him one of her carriages with attendants to convey and escort him thither.

He set out on a Tuesday, the day which he always particularly devoted to honouring Divine Providence and the holy angels, and made a slight divergence from his route to visit Augsburg. Half of the population at that time was Lutheran, and they had seven conventicles in the place. Boudon rejoiced at arriving on the feast day of the great St. Udalric—patron of the city and of the diocese, who had manifested when on earth a special devotion for holy pilgrimages—and at enjoying the privilege of saying Mass on the tomb containing his precious relics. He then proceeded to the Church of the Holy Cross, where a miraculous Host was preserved, which, having been stolen in order to make it the subject of horrible profanation, suddenly assumed the colour and appearance of flesh, which it had retained for many centuries. He testifies to the truth of this appearance, having seen with his own eyes the sacred species which had been thus miraculously transformed. Boudon was received as no stranger by the dean and subdean of this church, for the former had already translated one of his works into German, and the latter was at that time engaged on that of *Devotion to the Nine Choirs of Angels*. Etting, Boudon observes, was only a small village, but in former days it had been a town of great size. Having been burned by a horde of barbarians, nothing remained standing and unconsumed save the Chapel of Our Lady, which had been dedicated to her by St. Rupert, the Apostle of Bavaria, and contained her miraculous image. There was a collegiate church

of Canons close to it, the Bishop of Ratisbon being their Provost, who on every evening sang her Litanies and performed other pious exercises in her honour. The Jesuits also had a house at Cetting, where they passed their third year of novitiate, and Boudon records the hospitality shown by them to pilgrims. The Electors had, besides, built a house for the accommodation of strangers who repaired thither to pay their devotions.

The place was honoured with numerous miracles, so numerous, indeed, that Boudon relates that a cloister attached to the collegiate house had its walls covered with authentic testimonies of these marvels. The noble and the great, including crowned heads, were in the habit of visiting this famous sanctuary, which had thus become one of the richest in Christendom by the offerings made to it. All glittered with silver, gold, and precious stones, with which even the chasubles were studded. The young Duchess of Bavaria had, on her first arrival, being then only sixteen years of age, made a pilgrimage thither on foot from Munich, distant about sixty miles. Some idea may be formed of the number of priests and religious, as well as of devout laity, who resorted to this sanctuary from Boudon's statement that, in the course of one single year, ninety thousand Masses had been said in this chapel, which contained numerous altars. That God desired to be glorified in that place was manifest, he says, from apparitions of our Lady, and even of her Divine Son Himself, to persons in extreme peril, bidding them go and honour her in her holy chapel. Boudon left Cetting enriched to his heart's content with a present made him by a German count of an image which had touched the miraculous one of Mary. He had, moreover, the agreeable

surprise of meeting with other, though less celebrated, miraculous sanctuaries of the Blessed Virgin along his road, so that it seemed to him that God was pleased specially to magnify His august Mother in these lands, in order to confound all the efforts of heresy and the rage of hell.

He gives a warm tribute of praise to the beauty and rich decoration of the Bavarian churches, even those of the villages, all of which—at least all that he saw—possessed their organ. He spent three days at Munich, saying Mass at the church of the Theatines, which he regarded as a great privilege, seeing that it was dedicated to St. Cajetan, a saint of his particular devotion and one of the patrons of Bavaria; the great saint of Divine Providence, as he styles him. Both this church and that of the Jesuits were singularly magnificent, and both had been built at the expense of Electors and their wives. The Jesuit house was very beautiful, and would have been more so had the Duke, its founder, been allowed to carry out his full intentions, but the modesty of the Fathers put a check upon his munificence. They did not, however, refuse the numerous precious relics with which he enriched it. Boudon also said Mass in the Church of St. Anne appertaining to a convent of the Visitation nuns, who on this occasion exposed a finger of that great saint which they possessed, and made a general communion in her honour. After that, he preached to such as understood the French language, notice having been given of his intention. On the following day he addressed pretty nearly the same persons at the house of an English sisterhood who owed their establishment to the persecution of the faith in their own unhappy country. These Sisters appear to have followed a rule

closely resembling the Ursuline, and wore a religious habit, though they were not, strictly speaking, nuns, being bound only by a vow of chastity. Boudon gives a very favourable report of them, and of the work they were doing for the education of girls there and elsewhere, for they had several houses in Germany. On the day of his departure he had the further satisfaction of saying his Mass before another miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin in the church of the Augustinians.

The topic of his sermons was always substantially the same—love, divine love; the love of the Three Adorable Persons of the Ever-Blessed Trinity. We raised the cry of Divine Love, he says—it is a favourite expression of his, not susceptible of close literal interpretation—“*Nous criâmes au divin amour.*” He went about, as he elsewhere observes, crying this out, as men cry “Fire” when a house is in danger of burning; adding, however, that the object of his cry is exactly the reverse of theirs, for he wishes, not to extinguish, but to kindle and fan the flame. “We are now,” he writes—as he draws to the conclusion of his long letter to the Superioress of the Ursulines at Evreux—“raising this same cry before their Highnesses and such of the Jesuit Fathers as understand our tongue, as well as all those persons belonging to the Court who are acquainted with it; and verily this is all that we have to do. This is the object which leads us from province to province and from kingdom to kingdom.” He then goes on to give utterance to his usual impassioned expressions of love for Him who is the Alone Lovable, and to pray that this divine fire, which Jesus came to kindle on earth, may consume the hearts of all, so that, stripped of creatures and of their very selves, God

alone in the union of Jesus may be their one and great All.

Boudon was known and appreciated through his writings before he came to Germany, and many devout souls who entertained no hope of ever seeing him had secretly united themselves to him in prayer, begging God to give them a share in the merit of his good works. He glorified God for these things, being convinced that He only could have produced this charity in the hearts of His servants through the reading of these little books ; for all that was in them of his own, he said, was rather worthy of contempt than of esteem ; it must, therefore, have been solely in virtue of the divine power operating through them, that they had this effect, God willing thereby to show how He loves to make use of what is low to confound what is high. He then gives his own estimate of his works. These productions, he says, were, like his sermons, simple in style, being altogether devoid of those graces which the world of that day so highly valued, not to speak of those whose withdrawal into the cloister ought to have rendered them indifferent to such embellishments. There was nothing in them to please a cultivated or literary taste, nothing in which the mind would take a natural delight ; on the contrary, there was much to repel. The books were generally very ill printed, upon coarse paper, and were often full of typographical errors, so that they were repulsive even to himself, though naturally we like our own productions. And if they disgusted their author, how could they fail of being distasteful to others ? Here, then, he observes, was sensibly manifested the action of Divine Providence ; and he alleges, as an instance, that very soon after the appearance of his little work, *God Alone*,

above fifty thousand copies had been sold, and that it had been translated into Italian, Spanish, Polish, Latin, and German.

If Boudon saw much to edify him in Germany, nevertheless he passes some severe strictures on the secularity and inordinate wealth of the higher clergy. We have seen him already allude to these abuses as the fruitful cause of the spread of the Lutheran heresy. "Ecclesiastics," he writes, "have large possessions in Germany, and the bad use which was made of them has been the source of many disasters." Cupidity tempted many persons to embrace the ecclesiastical state whom God did not call thereto; and these individuals, who had either intruded themselves or had been compelled to enter it by their parents, being thus unfitted to discharge its duties, fell into much evil, to the loss of their own souls and those of many others, as well as to the scandal of the Church at large. In most of the Chapters, even the collegiate ones, proofs of nobility were required for admittance: "But, O my God," he exclaims, "these nobles of the world are often very contemptible in Thine eyes!" Bishops frequently possessed more than one see and Canons had prebends in different churches. Some bishops had not even entered holy orders, and led a purely secular life, getting their dioceses administered by other prelates. Almost all these bishops were sovereign princes, and some, he takes occasion to say, ruled their dioceses in a very exemplary manner. Amongst these honourable exceptions he includes the Bishop of Augsburg, a very pious prelate, who made himself personally acquainted with all his Curés, and maintained good order everywhere. His Coadjutor was a prince and a nephew of the Emperor. The bishop of the principal city of

Bavaria—we presume that he means Freysing—was not in priest's orders, nevertheless he had the administration, and consequently enjoyed the revenues and patronage, of two bishoprics. He had for Coadjutor a young Bavarian prince, brother to the Elector. The Archbishop of Saltzburg, whose suffragan he was, had a revenue of fourteen hundred thousand francs. "Oh, how much happier," he says, "is the condition of the good German people! Alas, what will all these temporal goods avail at the hour of death? Will a single farthing thereof remain to their owners? Yes, my dear mother, let us say with the Truth Himself, 'Woe to the rich, but Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

CHAPTER XVII.

BOUDON'S RETURN TO EVREUX—HIS SERIOUS ILLNESS AND MULTIPLIED CORRESPONDENCE.

AFTER a sojourn of nearly three months, during which his humility was continually pained by the marks of esteem, or even veneration, which were lavished on him, Boudon left the Bavarian court on the vigil of St. Laurence. His departure was the cause of universal regret, but more than all to the Duchess. She had derived all the consolation she had anticipated from communication with her old director, and gladly would she have retained him near her had that been possible. The only thing which reconciled her to parting with him was his promise to write to her from time to time, a promise

which he faithfully kept, and their correspondence continued up to the time of his death, which preceded hers only by four years. Of her exceeding kindness he does not fail to speak with gratitude, referring all as usual, however, to God. "Truly," he says, writing to his friend M^{me}. Rouves, "I am touched with the charity of this good princess, for it is an overflowing charity which spares nothing; she insisted on giving me a cloak and other things; in short, she would like to give me everything. But in all this, as in everything else, what do we see but the infinitely sweet ways of Divine Providence? It is that Providence, therefore, which we must bless, praise, thank, love, adore, and glorify in all that we receive on the part of men." Collet says, and it is in every way probable, that, having inquired into the manner of his life at Evreux, she thought his extreme poverty unbecoming his position as archdeacon, considering also the fatigues which this office involved, and which were the more trying to him on account of his advancing years and growing infirmities. She wished, therefore, to present him with a modest equipage and to provide for the expense which it would entail. But Boudon could not be prevailed upon to accept her offer, and, to prevent her repeating it, he told her that he had made a vow of poverty, and that hitherto he had depended entirely on Providence, which had never failed him. We have seen how steadily he also declined making use of the ducal carriage any farther than to Strasburg, from which city to Nancy there was a public conveyance.

He made a brief stay, on his road to Strasburg, at an Ursuline convent, the precise situation of which he does not indicate. For some years past the Superioress had earnestly pressed him to visit their community,

but the great distance had hitherto rendered the journey impossible to him. Now, however, that she heard he was in Germany, she renewed her entreaties, adding that, if he did not hasten his coming, she should not be alive to see him; which, in fact, she was not, and he heard of her death before leaving Tirkheim. Nevertheless, he did not fail to go, in order to console the nuns for the loss of their saintly superioress. Boudon was now beginning to suffer from the effects of all his recent fatigues and exertions, and arrived at Nancy on the 22d of August in a high state of fever, which he recognises as a special favour bestowed upon him by the Queen of Heaven on the Octave of her glorious Assumption, noticing at the same time the merciful dealings of Providence with him in delaying his sickness, which would certainly have occurred sooner had not its natural course been suspended; "and what should I have done," he says, "had I fallen ill in the midst of those German roads?" The hospitality of several communities was pressed upon him, and numerous laymen were equally desirous to receive him in their houses, but he accepted the offer of the good nuns of Notre Dame du Refuge, who lodged him outside their convent and furnished him with all the assistance which his state required. Their physician, who attended him, judged his life at first to be in danger, and, although he happily rallied, yet the fever left him in a state of such extreme weakness and suffering that he was detained above a month at Nancy, and did not reach Evreux until the beginning of October.

We must not omit to record here the miraculous assistance received immediately after his departure by the convent which had entertained him during his

long illness. "Provisions," says Collet, from whom we learn the fact, "were extremely dear that year; and the Superioress of the Refuge, whose community was very numerous, experienced some uneasiness because she had only a sufficient quantity of corn and flour in store to last six months. Boudon, to whom she confided the cause of her anxiety, assured her that God would provide for the needs of her community, and that her mind might be quite at rest. This assurance was verified, and that by a striking miracle. A house which had shown so much charity to the holy Archdeacon deserved to be rewarded as was that pious widow of Sarephta, who so generously shared with Elias the morsel of bread which remained to her. The provisions of the Refuge were miraculously multiplied, and what would naturally have been consumed in six months lasted a whole year and a half. "I was at the monastery at that time," said Collet's informant, "and was, with the rest, an admiring witness of this marvel, which, indeed, included two; one of prediction, the other of multiplication. Moreover," added the nun, who was superioress at the time when she made this communication to Boudon's historian, "this is not the only grace we received in return for the charity shown to M. Boudon; and who could enumerate the blessings granted to us through his prayers? That will be known only in eternity."

Boudon was still in a very languid state when he arrived at his journey's end, but that did not prevent him from at once applying himself, if possible, more diligently than ever to the affairs of the archdeaconry, or from replying without delay to the numerous letters which awaited his arrival and which continued daily to pour in upon him from all quarters. One might

have thought that such a correspondence as his would have been sufficient to fill up his whole time, and it is a wonder how he found enough besides for his multiplied sermons and works of charity. Moreover, assured of his zeal and good will, no one spared him; indeed it is seldom that people who work with a good will and never complain are spared, and certainly Boudon never complained. Accordingly, there was a tendency to use him up, so to say, and the desire not to be deprived of the enjoyment of hearing him far exceeded the fear of inducing him to overtax his strength. The religious communities were in this respect as exacting as any, and scarcely was winter over and his Lent visits paid when he found himself earnestly pressed to repair to Paris, in order to satisfy the impatience of several religious houses, whom his absence and subsequent illness during the previous year had robbed of the happiness of hearing him speak to them of God. Thus several months had to be devoted to giving retreats and preaching successively in seven or eight convents, with which for years he had entertained close spiritual relations. But that was not all; the rest of his time was fully occupied by secular friends and by persons living in the world, who rejoiced in the opportunity of profiting by his advice and hearing him discourse on holy things. The year 1686 appears to have been entirely consumed between Paris and Evreux, but in the spring of 1687 we find him setting out for Flanders and giving missions at Brussels, Antwerp, Tournai, and Mons. Everywhere his ministry had its accustomed success, and, on his return to Cambrai, the Archbishop gave him plenary powers to preach throughout his diocese, strongly urging him to remain during the rest of the summer.

Boudon consented. Cambrai and Valenciennes profited accordingly for a considerable time by his apostolic labours; and the close of the autumn still found him there, when it was necessary for him to return to Evreux without visiting Lorraine, which would seem to have been his original intention, pressed as he was to return thither, particularly by the nuns of Notre Dame du Refuge at Nancy, who, as just noticed, had tended him during his long illness when returning from Bavaria.

Many may be inclined to wonder how Boudon, whose income was insufficient to enable him to live decently in the most retired and humble style, could afford to make these long journeys and defray the expenses incidental to them. But here we have reason to admire how God is pleased to reward a filial confidence in His providential care, such as Boudon possessed in so eminent a degree. It is true that his poverty and his disinterestedness were matter of general notoriety, so that usually, when his presence was solicited in some distant province, the request was accompanied with an offer to pay his travelling expenses, and arrangements were undertaken for his accommodation, so far as possible, on the road, whether in religious houses or in those of worthy laymen in the provincial towns through which he was to pass. But in cases where these resources were wanting, and where he might very reasonably have pleaded his consequent inability to accede to the invitation, Boudon made no difficulty on this account, but set out with the most perfect conviction that God would provide; a conviction which was never belied, for on these occasions he would receive help of so extraordinary and unexpected a nature that even a faith less lively than his could not

have failed to recognise therein a truly miraculous action of Divine Providence, which in his regard did not limit itself to that ordinary care which God extends to all His creatures. It is easy, indeed, for one who has faith to see and confess a wonderful intervention of this kind when it has been manifested, but it is not given to all to expect or rely upon it beforehand. All can see and confess the miracle when the ravens bring Elias punctually his morning and evening meal, but all have not the heroic faith of the prophet who went to abide on the desolate banks of the torrent Carith, trusting to the word of the Lord: "I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." *

Without any special revelation, Boudon had equal confidence that what was needful to support life would never fail to be supplied to him. Humility led him to conceal the greater part of the favours of which he was the exceptional object, nevertheless his gratitude impelled him to divulge some of these marvels. In his work entitled *The Perpetual Adoration of Divine Providence*, he expresses himself thus, using, as was his frequent practice in such cases, the third person when alluding to himself: "Let it not be thought that Divine Providence is not the same in our days as in former times. I know a person who, having no certain possession save the help of this Providence, in which alone he places his confidence, entertaining a horror of the smallest reliance on any human means, has received most astounding aid for these last thirty years, ever since God, most good and most merciful, called him to this state of pure abandonment to Its care." He contents himself with selecting two instances from amongst the numerous examples of this never-failing care.

* 3 Kings xvii. 2-4.

Being under the necessity of making a journey unprovided with any money to defray the cost, he received on the eve of setting out a considerable sum from a great servant of God, who was far away at the time and had no knowledge either of his design or of his need, but who had been suddenly struck, while in prayer, with an interior light directing him to send this money to the person in question. Collet says that this servant of God was M. de Bernières. On another occasion, being in great straits from having scarcely anything remaining for his own subsistence, Boudon did not fail any the less to bestow a crown-piece on a necessitous person, trusting in the promises of his dear Saviour, when immediately he receives a letter conveying to him a thousand crowns on the part of an individual to whom this act of charity had suddenly suggested itself. But Boudon's whole life was filled with similar occurrences. It is related of him, for example, how, during a rigorous winter, he was on the point of leaving Caen to return to Evreux, when a poor woman, whom he met in the street, gave him a touching account of her extreme destitution; whereupon, without hesitation, he emptied his pocket of all which it contained; and it contained only what he himself required to defray the expenses of his journey back to Evreux. He walked on very peaceably, when, a few minutes after, a stranger approached him and, having put into his hand a sum double the amount of what he had just given away, hurriedly passed on without addressing a word to him. Truly in this holy man was verified the promise of our Lord: "Give, and it shall be given to you."*

The care of Providence was singularly manifested

* St. Luke vi. 38.

also by the protection afforded in the hour of danger; and those journeys which he never allowed human prudence to deter him from undertaking were often accompanied with considerable danger, as well as inconvenience and discomfort. In a letter to M^{me}. de Rouves he describes a journey he had lately made, in which he playfully observes that he had the opportunity of enjoying one of St. Francis's recreations, for it was in similar misadventures that the Saint took a special pleasure. At the approach of night he found himself in a forest where the track was covered with deep snow, and the wolves made themselves unpleasantly visible among the trees. Suddenly he received an interior impulse to retrace his steps. Now, this was from no movement of fear, a sentiment unknown to Boudon, whose courage was undaunted, and to whom the difficulties and perils of the way were no novelty. His natural disposition would have been to pursue his course, but he recognised in this movement a suggestion of his good mother, Divine Providence. So he turned back, and found refuge for the night in a miserable little tavern on the skirts of the forest, where he could not so much as dry his wet clothes, procure a morsel to eat, or enjoy the comfort of a candle. He held himself honoured, however, in being sheltered in so poor a lodging, which recalled to his mind the Stable of Bethlehem. On the morrow he pursued his laborious road, accomplishing only six miles before nightfall, so deep was the snow through which his horse had to toil. From what he both saw and heard at the hostelry which he reached, he had reason to be thankful that he had turned back on the previous night, as he must infallibly have lost his way amidst the deep snow in that trackless wood had he proceeded any farther. It was a sweet Provi-

dence, he said, which had pressed him to retrace his steps. "Necessity," he adds, "has compelled me to accept a cassock, which I received in the name of our good Saviour Jesus Christ." All was, indeed, sweet to him,—discomforts and deliverance from discomforts alike, for the sake of the Hand which he looked to as the bestower of all.

The abundant benedictions attendant on his labours and the multiplied requests which poured in upon him to extend their sphere, requests which his zeal for God and thirst for souls rendered him almost powerless ever to refuse, laid upon Boudon an intolerable burden. Time, indeed, as well as bodily strength, was wanting to accomplish all the good works which were pressed upon him, and to which he lent all too ready a hand. But an insurmountable barrier was about to be placed to his active exertions, in the form of an incurable malady with which it pleased God to afflict him, and from which he was to suffer intensely during the last fourteen years of his life. He was preaching at Chartres on the 18th of July, 1688, intending after a brief stay to proceed to give a mission in Basse Bretagne, when, carried away by the fervour of his zeal, he spoke with so much vehemence as to cause a very serious internal injury, from which it soon became evident that the saddest consequences must result. The Carmelites, with whom he was lodging, tended him during the crisis which ensued with the most assiduous care, but all the resources of art were unavailing to remedy the evil. These good nuns then redoubled their supplications to the Blessed Virgin to obtain a cure, and, in effect, Boudon seemed at first to be better; and, after he had left Chartres, we find him writing to them to say that he felt convinced that he

was indebted to the charity of their prayers for the improvement that had taken place. Whether it were that the surgical treatment of his complaint was less understood in those days, or that the case was of a very complicated and peculiar character, his life henceforth was to be one of cruel suffering and of ever-increasing infirmity. He was soon convinced that such was the prospect before him, and he met it with his usual calmness—if we might not rather say thankfulness—calling on his friends to aid him to adore, bless, and glorify Divine Providence for having sent him this distressing malady.

One of its first consequences was to compel him to give up all distant missions, a work at which he had incessantly laboured for the last sixteen years. He was obliged now to confine his charitable excursions to Rouen, Chartres, and Paris, and to limit himself to giving retreats to the religious communities of those places, as well as of Evreux. He continued, however, to terminate the visitations which, in the intervals of his terrible sufferings, he was able to make, with his customary exhortations. To attempt more was no longer within his power. The rest of his time was occupied in the spiritual care of those persons who had placed themselves under his direction, many of whom consulted him by letter, and in that which was his sweetest and most consoling exercise, prayer. Since the publication of his books, his correspondence, always large, had swelled inordinately, and, after the commencement of that malady which was gradually to lead him to the grave, the number of letters which he felt himself called upon to write—for he always responded faithfully and punctually to those which he received—was so exceedingly great that his friend, M. Bosguérard,

could not conceive how he found strength for the work, or, considering his poverty, money to pay the postage. Yet, so far from seeking to avoid any addition to the list of his correspondents where he thought the good of a single soul might be promoted, he would even charitably invite persons to write to him whom reserve or timidity deterred from requesting a permission which he knew they would value as a spiritual consolation.

However, it was not now only, when illness and age were diminishing his powers, that we may find cause to wonder at the amount of what Boudon could accomplish with his pen ; it is equally surprising to notice what he found possible to achieve in the way of literary work during the most active portion of his life. It was in the midst of frequent journeyings, so unfavourable, as every one, and especially every writer, must know, to that species of employment, and while engaged in unceasing apostolic labours, that he found time to publish in the course of four years the Lives of three saintly persons. He was requested by the Jesuits at Bordeaux, while giving a mission there in the summer of 1679, to write that of P. Surin, one of those eminently holy souls who have illustrated their Order, and whose works are to the present day considered to be a spiritual treasure by all who aim at making progress in the interior life. Boudon placed himself in communication with the religious who had written under Surin's dictation, at the time when he was suffering those appalling trials which were the fruit of his heroic charity,* and several

* While P. Surin was acting as exorcist at Loudon, the devils were constrained to declare that two sorceresses had got possession of three consecrated Hosts, intending to profane them, upon which Surin offered himself to the Eternal Father, consenting that his own body should fall under the power of the devils in order to obtain the deliverance of the Adorable Body of His Son out of

letters still extant, which are dated from Bordeaux in the January of 1780, show that the Fathers were engaged at that date in collecting for Boudon the necessary materials for the Life, which by the 2d October of the same year was finished and had been placed in the hands of the censors for approbation. It was with similar rapidity that he composed the Lives of P. Jean Chrysostome, a religious of the Third Order of St. Francis, of whom we have already spoken in connection with M. de Bernières, whose director he was, and of Marie-Elisabeth de Ranfaing, foundress of the Refuge, both which Lives were published in 1684.

Boudon, it would appear, must have worked at them simultaneously. That of the foundress of the Refuge was certainly not begun before 1682, when he gave his earliest mission in Lorraine and preached for the first time to her spiritual children. They begged the Princesse de Vaudemont, whose veneration for Boudon was unbounded, to join with them in soliciting him to undertake the Life. This lady, who belonged to the illustrious house of Lorraine, gloried much more in the holy personages which it had produced than in the so-called great men who had added to its worldly honour, and had even commissioned M. Dubois, Censor of the University of Louvain, to write their Lives. A letter of hers to Boudon, in which she beseeches him to assist her by his counsels and letters, and thanks him for the honour he has conferred on Lorraine by writing the

their impious hands. His prayer was heard and miraculously answered. The price also was accepted. He had offered himself, secondarily, for the freedom of the Mère des Anges from her state of possession, but it was divine charity, the love of Jesus, which prompted both offers, which, indeed, merged in one, viz., to deliver Jesus in His natural Body and in a member of His mystical body from a humiliating thralldom.

Life of Elisabeth de Ranfaing, breathes a spirit of child-like humility, which reflects great credit on her. The Life of this nun, full of most extraordinary facts, which were yet fresh in the memory of men and had been thoroughly investigated by competent ecclesiastics, was published at the Princess's expense, and had great success in Lorraine.

It will be readily understood that, when so many pious souls, religious and secular, both in distant provinces of France and in Flanders and Germany, who looked to Boudon as their spiritual guide, were debarred from the prospect of ever seeing or hearing him again, they should endeavour to find some compensation in more frequent epistolary communication. Of the vast number of letters which he must have penned, a relatively small, although absolutely large, proportion has been preserved, and they may truly be said to form not the least valuable portion of his writings. Besides charming us by the faithful mirror they present of the writer, his exalted sanctity and perfect simplicity, they give us an idea which nothing else could so fully have done of what his singular gifts as a director must have been. We can, of course, form but a very inadequate conception of what these letters were to the individuals who received them, and to whose spiritual needs they were specially appropriate, but we can see enough to justify all that we are told of the value set upon them. They were passed from hand to hand, superiors read them to their assembled communities, and a letter addressed to one of the nuns was sure to be considered as too precious a treasure for her to hope to retain its exclusive ownership. But it was not religious only with whom he corresponded, for, as we have noticed, a large number of persons living in the world desired to keep

up frequent communication with him, and amongst these are to be reckoned individuals of the highest rank. His books had fostered this desire. The great aim of all these writings is to urge on Christians the duty of labouring after complete self-detachment, and so clearly does he demonstrate its necessity that many of his readers conceived a strong desire to become personally acquainted with him, in order to learn from his lips the means of undertaking a task so arduous; there were those who even travelled to Evreux with the sole object of conferring with him. A Curé of the diocese of Mans, after reading some of his books, wrote to him that henceforth he renounced those speculative sciences on which he had hitherto wasted his time, and would occupy himself exclusively with the science of divine things, of which the writer had so well proved the excellence. He conjured him to aid him in this design, and to give him counsels both for his own benefit and that of the souls entrusted to his care, begging him also to furnish him with a list of his published works. This letter, which was characterised by a most touching humility, elicited the fullest and most charitable response from Boudon. Here was another active correspondence at once established, of which the good Curé of Sargé did not retain the profit solely for himself and his flock, for he communicated both books and letters to his friends and to the most influential ecclesiastics in the diocese. The Bishop of Mans, having heard of these books and made himself acquainted with them, judged that they would be very useful for the instruction of his young clerics and for the edification of all his priests; he desired accordingly to have them read in his seminary and at ecclesiastical conferences, rejoicing at being able thus to set before

his clergy the most solid lessons of perfection. Boudon, indeed, had reason to say that books are the best of missionaries.

His correspondents were to be met with also amongst the highest ranks of the clergy, both secular and regulars. It seemed sufficient for any one to have in hand an undertaking connected with the service of God, or to be suffering under a spiritual perplexity or trial, for him instantly to have recourse to the lights of this holy man, and his counsels were accepted as little short of oracles; nay, there were persons who would write to him from the sole desire to obtain a share in his prayers, or a scrap of his handwriting in return. His fame, by means of his books, had reached Italy, and a letter written by a noble Genoese, Paolo de' Franchi, which has been preserved, testifies to the veneration with which he was regarded there. He tells Boudon that two letters which he had received from him had been translated into Italian, as containing, so to say, an abridgment of Christian perfection useful to place in the hands of pious persons. He informs him that many practices of devotion had been adopted and confraternities erected in various Italian towns owing to his having recommended them in his works, and that they awaited his instructions to do the like at Genoa. Great scourges threatened his country at that time, and he humbly implores Boudon's intercession on its behalf, begging him also, should God be pleased to communicate to him what He required of them, freely to acquaint him with it; for that he could assure him that, being known as he was and so highly esteemed in Genoa, his counsels and warnings would be received with singular pleasure.

The correspondence which Boudon kept up with his

old benefactor and friend, the Bishop of Quebec, was perhaps that in which his heart took most delight. Mgr. de Laval was spending his days in Canada amidst many trials and difficulties. There also laboured several of Boudon's former beloved associates: the Abbé Desmarets, who was placed at the head of the Quebec Seminary; the Abbé Glandelet, an intrepid preacher, devoted to the conversion of the Iroquois; and the Abbé de Bernières, Dean of the Chapter, to whom the memory of his venerable uncle added a special claim on Boudon's affection. These old friends and brethren mutually communicated to each other, so far as their wide separation permitted, the plans and works which God moved them to undertake for His glory, as well as the crosses which He was pleased to send them. In all these matters Boudon's advice was sought with the same avidity as at the time when, it will be remembered, his piety had insured him in their infant congregation an influence which was well-nigh absolute. Notwithstanding the great difference between the career which Mgr. de Laval was called to pursue and that of Boudon, there was nevertheless a certain resemblance or analogy between the crosses to which they were subjected; in this respect, at any rate, that both had to endure the most unjust and unmerited treatment, and that, too, proceeding from quarters whence it ought least to have been anticipated. Mgr. de Laval had no sooner arrived in Canada than he began to experience the most vexatious opposition to all his plans on the part of the colonial Government. Louis XIV., as a testimony of his high esteem, having appointed a governor on the prelate's recommendation, the best hopes might have been entertained that all would now go smoothly. For the person chosen to fill this office had been the inti-

mate friend of M. de Bernières, and had given proofs of much worth and of exemplary piety ; nevertheless, this man, who had attained his position through the Bishop's interest, became his strenuous opponent, and conceived so much prejudice against him as to write of him in most disadvantageous terms to the Court of France.

Mgr. de Laval thought that the time was now come for him to resign a dignity which he had consented to assume only for the good of religion ; he accordingly selected from amongst his friends the ecclesiastic whom he believed to be the most worthy of the office, and had the satisfaction to see M. de St. Valier appointed on his recommendation to fill the place he had vacated. But scarcely had the new prelate been installed in his see when he, too, took part against his predecessor, changed or abolished all the institutions which he had founded, upset the order which he had established in his seminary, disgraced all those priests who had been attached to him and who had been his most zealous collaborators as well as the warmest friends of Boudon. Several years elapsed before this prelate, whose intentions seem to have been good, but who was probably the dupe, as Mgr. de Maupas was in Boudon's case, of the gross misrepresentations of interested persons, opened his eyes at last to the ingratitude of which he had been guilty towards his benefactor, and repaired the injustice which he had committed. Mgr. de Laval, however, had, like his friend the Archdeacon of Evreux, a generous soul, which no injustice of which he was the object could ever either embitter or disturb. He had borne all these trials with a serene spirit, as may be gathered from the following passage in a letter to Boudon :—“ Pray earnestly, my dear Monsieur,

that we may make a good use of the crosses which it pleases our Lord to lay upon this Church. When you go to Paris, you will learn from our friends the means He employs for that end. You will perceive that they are the more extraordinary as proceeding from those whom we should have expected to be its main support. Our Lord is amiable in all things, and, by taking all from His hand, we shall ever enjoy a peace of which no man can deprive us." In reading this passage, we recognise how truly these two were of one heart and one mind, and do not wonder that until death they continued to interchange their inmost thoughts and feelings, and that no separation and no length of time could avail to cool a friendship which was made for eternity.



CHAPTER XVIII.

BOUDON'S GIFT OF DIRECTION—HIS POVERTY AND ISOLATION.

It has been remarked that Boudon's letters illustrate his peculiar talent for direction, if we ought not rather to call it a gift, for no mere talents can fit a man for the discharge of an office which calls for such deep spiritual insight and such consummate prudence of the supernatural order. It will be remembered how early in life this singular gift had manifested itself in him, and how he appeared to have the power of reading the hearts and the most secret thoughts of his companions, thoughts which often as yet they could scarcely explain to themselves, and how, along with this pene-

tration, he had also a wonderful prudence to discern and point out the path which they ought to pursue. The confidence hence reposed in him was, as we have seen, marvellous. His counsels were sought by numbers, and it is said that not one who followed the advice he then gave but made great advances in the spiritual life. If such was the success of the boy-director, we may imagine that Boudon, whose faithful correspondence with divine grace was one of his most remarkable characteristics, never allowed the heaven-bestowed gift he possessed to lie dormant, especially after his admission to the priesthood had conferred on him supernatural powers which heretofore he had not possessed.

Much has already been said of Boudon as a director. It remains, therefore, only to allude to his own views on the subject, and to the illustration incidentally thrown upon them in his letters. None ever regarded as of more vital importance the office of guiding consciences than did this holy priest. He considered that it involved a terrible responsibility, and that the art of exercising it profitably was the most difficult for an ecclesiastic to acquire. Moreover, he did not consider it as an art which could be acquired once for all, or of which any study, reflection, or practice could secure to a man the possession; for, besides all these, a constant aid and illumination was essential from Him who sounds the heart of man, and this help ought to be matter of daily assiduous supplication by one who undertakes the office of director. "He must have recourse to prayer," he says, "in order to receive the lights which are necessary for him, as well as the fortitude and other virtues of which he stands in need, giving heed not to depend on his own lights, or his

other talents, or on his previous experience."* Yet Boudon did not judge piety as all-sufficient to make a good director. Science was also necessary, for the lips of the priest ought to keep knowledge, and, above all, great personal holiness. "How shall a man give," he says, "what he himself has not? How cause the spirit of Jesus Christ to reign in others, if it does not reign in ourselves? A director, a preacher, a pastor of souls, may be in a state of grace, but, if he remains still attached to the things of earth, he will not go very far. They may be threads which hold him back, yet, so long as they are not broken, they will act as a check upon him."† But if the reader would wish fully to realise what Boudon thought of the importance and difficulty of the office of directing souls, he has only to consult the treatise on direction which he has appended to his work on Mental Prayer, from which the passage quoted above has been taken.

He was very desirous that directors should not impose their own ideas on their penitents or urge them on too fast, but leave them a discreet liberty, carefully noting what was their attraction, and seconding it. This he esteemed was the director's office; and that it was a mistake on their part when they regarded it in any other light. Accordingly, he condemned very strongly the reluctance which confessors sometimes evinced, amounting to a sort of tyrannical jealousy, to allow those under their care to seek other advice. Few directors, he thought, were suited to guide others in every path of the spiritual life, and some persons even at particular stages of their progress might profit by a change. For this reason he never himself under-

* *Le Règne de Dieu dans l'Oraison Mentale.* L. iv. c. vii.

† *L'Homme Intérieur.* Part i. chap. x.

took the direction of any one whom a special providence did not appear to lead to him, and, so far from seeking, even in these cases, the exclusive confidence of those who applied to him, he willingly allowed of their consulting others also, or of their leaving him altogether. He was neither grieved nor offended thereby, having regard to nothing but the spiritual profit of souls. Although, however, he never himself took any steps to attract persons to choose him as a director, yet, when well persuaded that the will of God called him to assume the charge of a soul, nothing upon earth could have induced him to decline it, no stress of occupations, no difficulties, no inconveniences, however great. We have seen an example of this fidelity to what he believed to be his duty in the case of *M^{me}. de Fourneaux*, where every motive of human prudence appeared to combine in commanding him to give her up; nay, even at one time a superior obligation, that of ecclesiastical obedience, seemed to conflict with his purpose of maintaining a certain amount of personal communication with her. If at last he broke off even this slight connection, it was because he had become convinced that he could no longer be of any use to her, and from no other motive whatsoever.

He was equally removed from too much indulgence and from its opposite, excessive rigour; and we may note in his letters many examples of the varying tone he knew how to assume according to the state or disposition of the person he was addressing. We find him with truly paternal tenderness administering consolation and encouragement to timid and afflicted souls, and again applying himself to humble those in whom he perceived a secret pride, so fruitful in illusions and so complete a bar, so far as it is cherished, to self-

knowledge. The Abbé Bosguérard from the very outset of his ecclesiastical career was subject to this fatal temptation. He was a high-spirited man, with a lofty and elevated tone of mind, and enjoyed, moreover, an independent worldly position, a circumstance which contributes not a little to foster arrogance wherever a tendency to a temper of that kind exists. Boudon loved that young friend more than his own life, and availed himself of the close connection which subsisted between them to pursue his faults unrelentingly. He who seemed to have no perception of the glaring offences of his enemies, and was most indulgently charitable to the defects of his neighbours, had a lynx's eye to discern the smallest imperfection where it was matter of direction. This may seem a paradox, but it is one with which saintly priests constantly present us.

Fortunately a very large number of Boudon's letters to the Abbé Bosguérard has been preserved, and they furnish us with ample proof of his unwearying diligence in pursuing his disciple's leading fault into its most secret hiding-places. We meet with a very singular instance, singular in one who of all men was certainly most indifferent to the amount of personal respect evinced for himself, so long as the honour of his sacred calling was not implicated. Thus we find him taking his friend to task for what he esteemed a deficiency in politeness, a deficiency which he is quick to notice in him because he was naturally inclined to haughtiness. M. Bosguérard, in one of his letters, had signed himself as "*Votre très acquis serviteur*," a less respectful form of conclusion than was habitual to him. Boudon evidently regarded this novel formula as significant of something reprehensible, and would

not let it pass. "By the mercy of our Lord," he writes, "as concerns myself it is a matter of perfect indifference, but as it regards you, this ought not to be. If you do it thoughtlessly, then it is merely a fault of good breeding; if you do it designedly, it indicates a root of pride. I call it a want of good breeding, because civility obliges us to treat the persons who write to us with the same respect they show to us; I mean persons with whom we are pretty nearly on an equality. Now, I assure you that I should make no difficulty in signing myself 'your obedient servant,' and even 'your very obedient servant,' not only to yourself" [which, in fact, he always did] "but to any one; and I can readily join St. Francis de Sales in saying, that I would adopt this way of speaking to my valet, supposing I had one, if I did not think that he would believe I was laughing at him. But, to return to what I was saying of that politeness which makes us render to our equals what they give to us. I am not your superior, nor are you mine; so that a little reciprocity is needed. Even in the world inequalities are not always so closely considered, for persons of the highest rank will express their obedience to those of whom they are asking advice. I say all this to you, because I fear lest this behaviour of yours may have its source in pride. For the rest, you may sign yourself as you please to me; I can assure you that I shall be quite satisfied. Only have a care not to fall into a state of blindness, which will cause you, while seeing, not to perceive."

This was certainly a smart rebuke. At other times he would assume quite a different tone, and appeal to his friend's faith in order to inspire him with sentiments of self-abasement and a horror of pride. "The pride of

priests," he says, "would justly call for a new hell. To know, to believe, the annihilations which a God made Man suffers daily in our hands, and then to have the least thought of being something—this is incomprehensible to humility : humility ! humility ! But there can be no true humility apart from its practice. Pray our Lord and His holy Mother to give me humility." He ends, we see, by taking his advice to himself ; but his corrections were always truly fraternal. He well knew the ground on which he was working, and was persuaded that his labour would not be in vain. Nor was it ; for Bosguérard turned against himself that inflexibility and hardness of disposition which had at first rendered his authority rather distasteful to his assistant clergy, and had before long the merit of manifesting as much gentleness and humility as if these virtues had been natural to him. How thoroughly rooted in his soul humility had become, may, indeed, be gathered from the desire which he expresses in the manuscript left by him, that all Boudon's letters to him should be published after his death, not having withdrawn a single one of those in which his friend had rebuked him for his faults with so much freedom.

After all that has been said of the high esteem, nay, veneration, entertained for Boudon, not only in every part of France, but well-nigh throughout Catholic Europe, not to speak of the New World rising in the West, and of the striking testimonies of these sentiments which were continually reaching him, one might have concluded that at Evreux, which knew him so well and during the closing years of his life enjoyed the almost uninterrupted spectacle of his piety, he would be overwhelmed with similar or still stronger marks of reverence and affection. Yet, strange to say,

it was not so, and at Evreux, speaking generally, Boudon to the very close of his career never met with anything but coldness and comparative neglect. It is true that he had no longer to encounter contempt or ill-usage; his reputation had been abundantly vindicated, and the voice of calumny had been silenced for ever. The restored favour of Mgr. de Maupas and that of his successor, Mgr. de Novion, which never underwent the slightest variation or diminution, insured to him outward respect, and imposed a check on the open manifestation of that ill-will which, it can scarcely be doubted, continued to rankle in the breasts of those who had been his active enemies and persecutors during so many years. But, after all, the number of these, particularly as years rolled on and thinned their ranks, must have been limited. Not but that some of the causes which lay at the root of that spirit of opposition which had led to the iniquitous conspiracy against Boudon's reputation, and the persevering and unscrupulous efforts made to bring about his expulsion from the diocese, must have continued still to operate secretly in his disfavour. This spirit has been more than once alluded to as the result of Jansenism, the evil and blighting influence of which was, we have seen, by no means restricted to those who directly favoured its erroneous teaching. Boudon was the active enemy of this spirit, and hence he did not cease to be the object of a latent hostility, which never left him quite at rest. Evidences of this may often be traced in his letters. In one, for instance, written long after the cessation of his disgrace, he thanks God for three special favours. The first was the state of abjection to which he had been reduced, when all men rose up against him and there was scarce

a house which would open its doors to him. The second favour for which he thanks the Providence of God, is for having so ordered it that he should never have any employment within the precincts of the Court. The third was the grace of that perpetual contradiction which attended him everywhere. Although, he says, Divine Providence blesses his labours—he is here alluding to his missions—nevertheless he endures a real persecution, for there are those—he does not name them—who write to bishops, grand-vicars and others in authority, to hinder his work, and deter persons from coming to hear him preach the Kingdom of God. Casual remarks of the same character not seldom occur in his letters to M. Bosguérard, as, for instance, where we find him alluding to the fact that some of the Evreux Curés deterred persons from going to hear him both in that city and in the country places. Yet all this fails to account for the neglect of which we are here speaking; for, if Boudon had in Evreux opponents and enemies for the reasons here adduced, nevertheless numbers were otherwise minded, and it would have been natural to expect that they, at least, would be eager to make amends by their respectful and affectionate attentions for the unworthy treatment to which the holy man had in past years been so unjustly subjected.

The absence of such attentions is difficult to account for; as a fact, its truth is unquestionable, since we have Boudon's own testimony to establish it. He mentions it in order to rejoice at it, not to lament over it. He loved the school of abjection, and his abandonment at Evreux was infinitely more to his taste than his magnificent treatment in Bavaria. After expressing the holy ambition which possesses him of attaining to the

rank of a true doctor in the hidden, abject, and despised life, and saying that such is the present attraction which his good Saviour gives him, he remarks that Divine Providence is pleased efficaciously to second these his desires. "I visit no one," he says, "and scarcely any one visits me; at least I have so few visitors that they are not worth mentioning. With the exception of those I meet at the Bishop's palace, where I dine every day—Mgr. the Bishop doing me that favour—I see hardly anybody, and as for those I meet there, I see them only in company with the prelate. I remark with a holy joy that as soon as he retires, or while we are awaiting him in his dining-room, if I am there no one comes near to speak to me, or, if I happen to be near them, they draw off; and the same thing happens to me elsewhere. I am a rejected creature. It is not that I think that any one really dislikes me; quite the reverse: it is because Divine Providence so disposes it. Nevertheless I am pained if on some extraordinary occasion I receive a visit from any one. Oh, how I value the grace of separation from creatures! Oh, how I bless Divine Providence, for all things, indeed, but especially for this! Truly Providence has shown Itself to be my good and most faithful mother, in that I was not allowed to die at the time when I had so many visitors that the room in which I lodged could not contain them all, at the time when people flocked to hear me preach in such numbers that the church of St. Pierre was not large enough to hold them, so that I could with difficulty make my way through the crowd which thronged the street. Now the congregation is very moderate, and I did not perceive that there were more than usual at my last visitation. Very few more, at any rate. When I reflect on this disposition of

Adorable Providence, I cannot weary of blessing It, and singing Its mercies. What a dangerous thing it is for a preacher or a director to be highly esteemed! I was forgetting to tell you besides that no one comes to me for confession, that is, only some two or three; nor is my counsel sought in the ways of God. I repeat that I am a rejected creature;" and he returns to rejoicing at being spared the danger of preaching with success to large audiences, at being forgotten and deserted, at having no place in the mind or heart of any one.

Other letters contain similar passages, in one of which we find him saying, "The religious, of whom Messieurs the Curés used formerly to complain that I considered them too much, do not visit me at all, and I may say that at present I scarcely know any one at Evreux except those I see at the Bishop's house." He adds here also that, although scarcely any one comes to see him, it always seems to him as if he had too many visitors. "I am never weary of my solitude," he says, "and dread the least visit."

Clearly Boudon never regained his early popularity in the city of Evreux, a popularity which probably even then he hardly possessed among the bulk of the Evreux clergy. We see that he attributed this circumstance to a disposition of Providence, but, without controverting this assertion, we may well inquire—since Providence, except in the case of an obvious miraculous intervention, acts ordinarily by means of secondary causes—what secondary causes there might be in the present instance; and we must observe that they were causes which continued in operation until his death, that is, during a period of near upon thirty years, counting from the date of his restoration to public consideration. It

would seem unreasonable, then, to refer the origin of this behaviour towards Boudon to the impression created by his previous persecutions, and to a disesteem which had become thoroughly rooted in the public mind. That some shame and embarrassment may have been at first experienced, especially among the clergy, is intelligible, but these feelings must necessarily have been temporary. Some abiding reason must be sought for this continued estrangement, or we must be content to leave the matter as we find it, that is, quite unexplained. Possibly the reason may to a certain extent be sought in Boudon himself, or, rather, in the contrast which existed between him and a clergy who to a large extent seem to have lacked any deep spirituality. His piety was of that character which formed an obstacle to any prolonged or close intercourse with those who had not aims consonant to his own. The individuals whom he could admit to intimacy were either those who already were all for God, or who were aspiring to be so, or whom he was striving to bring to that state of mind. With men whose piety was content with a lower level he could not assimilate himself, nor could they relish him.

What is called the commerce of the world was an atmosphere quite repugnant to him. To all that constitutes its charm in the eyes of the many he was an utter stranger; he had nothing to say which could interest ordinary good people who do not want to be always either speaking or thinking of God alone, and who like to have a little talk about things in general. Boudon did not want to talk about things in general. One thing alone occupied him, the Great All. He was distressed at every other subject of discourse, and actually groaned in spirit when compelled to listen to worldly conversation, which

seemed to him profitless even when it was free from any tendency to profanity ; so unable was he to repress his grief at seeing that what ought to be the sole engrossing object of men's minds was what least of all engaged their attention. Often, indeed, he did not refrain from expressing his astonishment, and it can be readily imagined that pious observations of this sort might be reckoned inopportune, if they were not altogether distasteful to many even of those who were in the habit of meeting him, and more or less, therefore, accustomed to his ways. He and they did not understand each other. It would have been as difficult to make them comprehend the charm of having their minds always occupied with God, as it would have been to inspire him with any taste for what he regarded as frivolous and insignificant talk ; or, rather, if the first would have been difficult, the last would have been impossible. Let us hear some of his own avowals of the weariness he endured. "It must be confessed, indeed," he writes to a friend, "that Christians know God very little, if they desire aught else but God, and are not contented with a God who is sufficient to Himself. I acknowledge that this is what renders conversation very tiresome and distasteful to me. Yet alas ! such is often the perpetual occupation of creatures. I feel pressed to say, '*Anima nostra jam nauseat super cibo isto levissimo**—Our soul now loatheth this very light food.' O my God, Thou alone, Thou alone, nothing but Thou, nothing but Thou ! there is nothing else to think of, or which we ought to occupy ourselves about. My soul is wearied with people saying to me, as is usual, 'How do you do ? How are you ?' Ah ! say I to myself, is that indeed what ought to occupy our minds ?

* Numbers xxi. 5.

We have many other things, and more important things, to inquire about. When I find myself travelling in company with several others, that is my time for mental prayer, of which I acquit myself very ill, but never better than on these occasions, for the sight of people so occupied about passing events, as they generally are, casts me into a state of wonderment at such forgetfulness of the great God of Eternity, who is most present to us, and then I feel penetrated with a lively sense of this presence. I write you these things after having a conversation which made me exclaim repeatedly, 'God Alone! God Alone!' and so I unburden my heart on this paper."*

But if a want of appreciation of his exalted piety may have rendered his society unattractive to men who had not broken with the world and its interests, and may thus account in a measure for his isolation, some other reason must be sought for the absence of enthusiasm respecting him as a preacher and director of souls. The change was not in himself, for, wherever he went, there was still the like eagerness as formerly to catch every word which fell from the lips of the man of God and to seek his counsels. In Evreux alone, in what may be called his country and home, he seems to have ceased to be "a prophet." That so it was we must take on trust from his own statement, and must after all rest satisfied with his explanation: Providence so willed it. Boudon's extraordinary love for solitude and desire to be alone with God led him to entertain the idea of retiring into some lonely spot where, unknown and forgotten, he could lead a hermit's life, and with this view he had fixed on the forest of Senart, about fifteen miles from Paris, already the

* Letter ccxxii.

resort of a few anchorites ; but the nature of his infirmities, which, moreover, became daily more serious, constrained him to abandon the project, and to content himself, as he says, with the hermitage of his room at Evreux. The wish to seek complete seclusion was nothing new with him, for, writing to his friend, M. Thomas, he says that his early predilection for lonely solitude made his school companions give him the nickname of M. de la Forêt.

As far as physical discomfort goes, he could not have enjoyed more in the depths of a forest than was his portion in this wretched apartment. It is described as occupying the ground floor of a paltry little tenement down by the river ; it seems to have been in a very dilapidated condition, with a door that closed ill and a broken step leading up to it. Though cold in the extreme, this lodging was neither airy nor well lighted. A few mats hung up against the walls, which had been provided, not by Boudon himself, but by some friends who profited by his temporary absence to try and make these comfortless quarters more endurable, partially served to mitigate the damp chill of the place, for Boudon, who was nearly skin and bone, suffered much from cold, though always without complaining or endeavouring to escape from it. He had, indeed, brought himself to this state by his continual fastings, long vigils, and ceaseless toils. A few straw chairs, and a trunk which had been lent to him to hold his clothes, together with his poor pallet, formed the whole furniture of the room. Over the chimney-piece was a representation of a flaming heart with these two words : " God Alone." Such was the apartment of the Archdeacon of Evreux during more than thirty years of his life, and here he drew his last breath. It is true that



he had a small adjoining room which might rather be called a closet, which served him as an oratory, and which, thanks to his piety, wore a more agreeable aspect. Here was a beautiful image in relief of our Lady, and the walls were adorned with prints of some holy persons whose memory he held in veneration, amongst whom were the Cardinal de Bérulle, the Père de Condren, and the Mère Elisabeth de Ranfaing, foundress of the Refuge. These religious objects, none of them costly, were all that Boudon possessed save the clothes he wore; all else had been lent to him by friends.

But, albeit so great a lover of poverty, Boudon had never anything repulsive in his appearance. His clothes, though worn, were always clean, and, when they could be mended no longer, he accepted with gratitude and simplicity what was given to him in their place. His manners were ever easy and gracious, his voice had not lost its charm of sweetness, and, although his features were changed by age and extreme attenuation, they were still regular and pleasing, preserving thus some faint traces of that delicate beauty which graced him in his boyhood. He never had any servant, but there were three or four devout women who affectionately and unobtrusively watched over him, and furnished him with what he absolutely needed. More, they knew, he would refuse, and they had too much tact to offer it. Amongst these ladies the chief and most active were M^{me}. de Rouves, M^{me}. Lefèvre, and M^{lle}. d'Outrebois, whose names occur often in his letters. To M^{me}. de Rouves a good number are addressed. Boudon, in fact, lived on alms; to this his dedication of himself to a life of poverty and his great love for a state of entire dependence on

Providence constrained him, yet he never wanted for anything, either for himself or to give to the poor. During the last years of his life he had made some friends at Paris whose respect and attachment were unbounded. Foremost amongst these must be named one who was also related to him, M. Thomas, Counsellor of the Châtelet, to whom we have several times alluded, and who, together with his whole family, regarded Boudon with a truly filial affection. He became the confidant and director of all M. Thomas's good works, which through his influence were extended to the poor Christians and infant missions of Canada. Boudon's letters to him abundantly prove the close friendship which united them, and in which M^{me}. Thomas seems to have had full share. Boudon never writes without mentioning her, and, we may add, her good angel, for his friends' angels were always included in the tie which united him to them, and he repeatedly alludes to his daily remembrance of her at the altar. Another of his warm and attached friends was M. Courtin,* priest at the Seminary of St. Nicolas du Chardonnet, with the directors of which institution Boudon had always kept up intimate relations. M. Courtin is habitually mentioned in his letters to M. Thomas.

Anxious to draw him to Paris, that he might finish his holy life among them, as also to provide him with an assured income, his friends in that city entreated him, as soon as his increasing infirmities began to render the discharge of his office of archdeacon most onerous to him, to resign it, and accept a pension of 3000 francs which they desired to settle on him ; while

* After Boudon's death, M. Courtin wrote his life, the original manuscript of which is in the great Seminary of Evreux.

the Bishop of Evreux, who was most solicitous to keep him under all circumstances, pressed upon him the acceptance of a benefice, the duties of which would be far less fatiguing than those attached to the office of archdeacon, and its revenue much larger. He refused both offers with much gratitude but equal firmness. It was not the first time that a benefice had been offered him in the diocese of Evreux. Pecuniarily speaking, it was needed to supplement the deficient remuneration of the charge he held, and both Mgr. de Maupas and Mgr. de Novion would gladly have made this arrangement, but Boudon had constantly refused to accede to it. And yet his office not only brought him in no profit, but cost him a considerable sum. Writing confidentially to a friend, we find him saying on one occasion that his benefice, that is, his archdeaconry, did not furnish the means of living, "and for this," he said, "I bless God; otherwise I should be departing from my state of poverty, which I esteem more than all the riches of the world. I am not sure whether during this coming year I shall have in all more than fifty francs of revenue, and I have to disburse three times that amount in tithes. Thus it is not by my benefice that I live; I have one much richer, which is inexhaustible: it is the infinite treasury of Providence, which is so good to me as even to furnish me wherewithal to give to the poor." In fact, as it will be remembered, Boudon would never have accepted the office he held had it supplied him with a maintenance, or helped in any way to maintain him; and besides, although he had not been judged fit to send on the foreign missions, on account of his delicate constitution, he had not lost sight of his missionary vocation, with

which the duties entailed by a settled benefice were in his opinion incompatible.

As for leaving Evreux, nothing could ever have induced him to take this step. It had been a city of crosses to him, crosses which he esteemed to be the seed of crowns, crosses which had purified his soul; a city where the ingratitude and forgetfulness of men had served to confirm in him the spirit of abnegation and the love of God alone. The storms which had there assailed him had only bound him more closely to its soil, and his heart clung to it with a true and deep affection. There he had lived and suffered, and there, above all, he was resolved to die in absolute poverty and complete abandonment to the care of that Providence in whose fostering arms he had been cradled from his very childhood.

CHAPTER XIX.

BOUDON'S INCREASING INFIRMITIES—RESIGNATION OF HIS ARCHDEACONRY.

THE sufferings of Boudon daily increased, and it is marvellous, considering the state to which they reduced him, how he was able to continue making his visitations with the same exactness and performing his customary charitable works. It was at the peril of his life that he went from parish to parish, instructing, exhorting, preaching, and giving retreats in religious houses, and even undertaking journeys to Paris, Rouen, and Chartres in compliance with the

desires expressed by communities in those cities. It is difficult to know which to admire most, the courage which prompted him to persevere in these active works of charity while thus weighed down with infirmity, or the heroic fortitude which he exhibited, giving thanks to God for sufferings under which few indeed attain to more than resignation. These notably increased about three years before his death. He was scarcely able to drag himself about, yet, the moment he could move, he might be seen resuming all his accustomed functions. "Divine Providence," he writes to M. Thomas, "lays a restraint on me at present through my infirmities, which oblige me to avail myself of the hand of one of my friends * in order to write to you. It has favoured me during my visitations with painful exercises. Once I was obliged to lie down on the road for some time, and towards the close of my circuit my sufferings augmented; I have been nevertheless mercifully enabled to go through all my visitations notwithstanding my pains, which towards the end, however, were aggravated in an extraordinary degree and prevented me sleeping. Last Sunday, having to go to another place to celebrate the parochial Mass, I was obliged to remain in bed until nine o'clock, so that I did not arrive until close on eleven. However, I delivered an exhortation to the assembled people, and in the afternoon gave one in another parish. My malady laid very great hold of me during the last of my visitations, which I had to accomplish under its immediate pressure; I esteemed

* This friend was M. Chanoine, a worthy ecclesiastic, who remained near Boudon during the closing years of his life, and assisted him at the hour of death. He was afterwards nominated parish priest of Reulli, a large village near Evreux, where he laboured with great profit for forty-five years.

it a great grace to close my labours, as did our good Master, with pain and suffering." These details, and others which he gives in this as well as in many of his letters to M. Thomas, are for the purpose of satisfying the charitable inquiries of his correspondent. Scarcely had he rallied from one of his attacks—and by rallying is meant no more than the restored capability of moving—than he was at work again, without any care or apprehension for the consequences. On one occasion we find him, while engaged in giving a retreat in a religious community, becoming so ill during the night that he was almost minded to ask for Extreme Unction. Yet at that very time he was planning other pious expeditions. The writer of one of the manuscripts examined by the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, and who was in the habit of seeing him during the last visits he made to Paris, relates how at the close of those agonising seizures, which would last from eight to ten hours, his friends every moment dreading to see him expire, he would, without allowing himself any interval for recovering from their exhausting effects, take his stick and drag himself laboriously to the places where he was expected to preach. He had even the courage one Sunday, after receiving Extreme Unction on the Saturday, to go and deliver an exhortation to the Daughters of the Cross in the Rue St. Antoine. The impossible was with him the only bar to his charitable activity.

His life was now one abiding expectation of death; we can hardly call it preparation in any peculiar sense, for he had always lived on the threshold of eternity. He had consented, at the pressing solicitation of friends, and especially of M. Bosguérard, to take medical advice, and had placed himself in the physicians' hands as a

victim to the will of God, following the prescribed treatment and submitting to the attempts to devise some remedy or alleviation to his infirmity ; but it was all in vain, as the doctors knew and privately confessed. Danger was imminent and a fatal termination inevitable. How soon the end might come, or how suddenly, they could not tell. Treating him, however, as doctors often treat their patients, they refrained from apprising him of his peril. It mattered little in this case whether or no this duty had been performed, at least as concerned the sick man himself. Nevertheless, when M. Bosguérard, at whose request Boudon had sought medical aid at Rouen, found on questioning the physician that the case was hopeless, and the danger urgent, he believed himself to be bound to communicate to his venerable friend the opinion which had been thus strongly expressed. Boudon in reply says, " Not only would M. de la Roche have caused me no pain by telling me the extent of my malady and the peril in which it places me, but he would have given me a singular pleasure in our Lord. I assure you that one of the sweetest subjects of discourse I could have with you would be concerning death, because it is a thought which separates from creatures and unites to God Alone, our sole happiness." After remarking upon some technical medical expressions concerning the character of his complaint that he did not understand them, he adds that it was to him a matter of holy indifference in what way he died, whether suddenly or otherwise, so long as God Alone was glorified. However, he thanks his friend for his charity in warning him, which no one else had done. " We die daily," he says, " and we see others die, yet no one wishes to talk of death : such is the ill-regulated state of men's minds."

If, in one sense, the thoughts of death and of eternity could scarcely be more present to Boudon than for long years they had been, they seemed, at least, to engross him more entirely than ever, and he now spoke still more frequently on the subject and with still more earnest impressiveness than had been his wont. Sometimes, indeed, subsequent events came to add a kind of prophetic import to his exhortations. One day, for instance, when he had been preaching in a convent of the Visitation at Paris, M^{me}. de Mongien, a cousin of his, who had been present, pressed him to come and dine with her. As she would accept no denial, pleading important affairs concerning which she needed his advice, apparently those of her conscience, Boudon complied, and accompanied her afterwards, at her request, to see M. de Gaumont, a Counsellor of Parliament, who was related to both of them. This magistrate was a good and pious man, and letters of his, still extant, prove his strong attachment to Boudon, and that he never lost any opportunity of testifying his affection for him. His son, who was about seventeen years old, was in the room, and Boudon felt himself interiorly moved to speak to him about eternity. "Well, my little cousin," he said, "do we love the good God? do we sometimes think that we have to die, and go to Heaven?" to which the youth replied that at his age one did not think much about the life to come; though it might be well for him, who was no longer young and also a priest. "But, my son," rejoined the Archdeacon, "do you not know that people die at seventeen years of age and go to appear before God even as they do at seventy?" The boy evidently did not think the conversation at all interesting, and Boudon dropped the unwelcome topic. They talked of other things,

and then, rising to take leave, he told them all that they would never more meet in this world, an anticipation which, considering his own age and decrepit state, was probably referred by his hearers to himself; but he meant otherwise. On quitting the house, he turned aside into a neighbouring church, to pray fervently for the conversion of his young relative, whose heart was beginning to open to the seductions of the world. God heard his prayer in behalf of the young man, who on that very evening was suddenly struck by the illness which was soon to carry him to the tomb. He at once remembered the prophetic words which his aged cousin had uttered, and along with the remembrance came the conviction that men may, indeed, die at all ages. He knew this before—who does not know as much?—but now he felt and realised its truth. He came to himself and, turning to God with sincere contrition for his sins, made a full and willing sacrifice of his life to the Divine Will. At the end of three months he died, full of confidence in the mercy of God and of grief for having ever offended Him. But neither his father nor his cousin, M^{me}. de Mongien, were alive to lament his loss. Both had died within a month of Boudon's visit, when he had said that they should see each other no more. Doubtless he who had this prescience of their approaching end obtained for them the grace of worthily preparing for that supreme hour.

Another similar circumstance, but of a saddening character, may be given as a further example of the knowledge often supernaturally imparted to this holy man, a circumstance which he never recalled to mind without shuddering at the thought of the judgment of God which shall be pronounced on the lovers of this world, and which will be terrible indeed in the case of

priests. One day an ecclesiastic of high position was talking with him, and, the conversation having taken a personal turn, this priest said with manifest satisfaction that, as for him, he was the most fortunate of men; that through his whole life he had met with nothing which did not conduce to his welfare and happiness; he had never known what sickness, care, or sorrow meant. Boudon, who looked upon everything with the eye of faith, listened with alarm to this self-satisfied statement, and, instead of felicitating his interlocutor, he did his best to show him that it is not thus that God treats His elect, and that an unbroken course of earthly prosperity is often a sure token of His displeasure. But he was speaking to a deaf man, who was quite willing to make over to him a share in all possible worldly crosses, provided he might continue to enjoy exemption from them in his own person. Then the holy Archdeacon heard an interior voice saying to him, in strong and distinct accents which penetrated his soul with dismay, those terrible words: "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"* Two or three hours later, word was brought him of the sudden death of this man who had been so well contented with himself and with his lot in life.

Towards the close of his days, Boudon heard of several other deaths of a very different kind, over which, if he shed tears—a tribute of love and friendship which he may likely enough have paid—they were at least tears which had no bitterness in them, nay, must have been mingled with a holy joy. The companions of his early youth, who had been associated with him in a pious league by which they consecrated

* Luke xii. 20.

themselves and their future lives to God's service, were one by one leaving the scene of their earthly labours and preceding him into eternity. His venerable friend, the Mère Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament, had died in 1698. Their friendship had lasted for fifty years. She was ten years his senior, and was therefore eighty-three years of age. Boudon was never guilty of the cruel kindness of believing that friends who had spent a holy life on earth must necessarily pass at once to the enjoyment of the beatific vision. His exalted notions of the infinite purity and justice of God would not permit him to relax his prayers on their behalf, and as, while they were yet in the flesh, he had striven always to promote their sanctification, so now his charity followed them beyond the grave, and he never ceased offering good works and suffrages for their souls or remembering them daily at the altar. And if, concerning persons whom he so highly revered, he entertained doubts of their immediate admission to the presence of God, much more did his deep humility cause him to expect that he should himself have to pass through the purifying fire of Purgatory. But not only did he believe that Purgatory was his due, he thought that nothing but a miracle of God's goodness could snatch him from the eternal torments which he considered to be his desert. Writing to M. Bosguérard on the subject of his own approaching death, he says, "I assure you that I am seized with fear in regard to hell, for I see that hell alone is what I deserve, and that without an extraordinary mercy it will be my portion. Yet I have a certain joy in reflecting on death, from the thought that I shall go into the country of God Alone, where all creatures will clearly know that He is the Great All, and that everything else is nothing; and

this they must know whether through compulsion or through love."

It was thus that love absorbed all fear in this holy man's soul, for, notwithstanding the apprehension which he truly felt of having merited hell, he had really that perfect love which casteth out fear. To attempt, however, to describe the state of feeling of persons who have attained to such eminent sanctity must always seem to involve paradoxes. Boudon's intimate conviction of his own unworthiness which was one of the fruits of that very sanctity, did not prevent his being also consumed with a burning desire to go and behold Him the knowledge of whose infinite perfections was another fruit of his high advance in grace, and was, indeed, the root of his self-abhorrence. That time, to all appearance, could not now be very distant; he was failing rapidly, and found himself forced to give up his charitable expeditions beyond the limits of the diocese of Evreux, and reserve his small remaining strength for his visitations. Any one less courageous and patient than he was would have deemed himself, indeed, to be now entirely past all active work, not only on account of his weakness and abiding state of suffering, but because of the fearful attacks to which he was subject at any moment, and which utterly prostrated him. Travelling on horseback was, of course, now quite out of the question; he therefore accepted from a lady at Evreux the accommodation of a species of wheel-chair, for which he hired a horse and a man to lead it. In this chair he was drawn at a foot's pace from parish to parish. It was a long process and a very trying one, for every movement aggravated his pains, and we may conceive how, along the rough country roads which he

had often to follow, many an inevitable shake or jolt must have racked his whole frame with torture.

In connection with one of these expeditions, Boudon, in a letter to M. Bosguérard, confesses with his customary simplicity and humility a fault into which he had been betrayed. Solely out of charity he had hired as his guide a man who owned a very poor horse. After making him, as he thought, reasonable remuneration—and Boudon was not one who ever tried to bargain, a proceeding to which he had a marked dislike—the man, at the instigation, as he believed, of others, returned a week later and insolently complained of the smallness of the payment he had received. Boudon was angry, and allows that he used hard words to him, treating the matter as a piece of imposition. “Ah, Sir!” he exclaims, “what reason have I to humble myself below every creature that ever was or ever shall be, as the most ungrateful and wicked of men!” What must have been the habitual perfection of his life, since, with the exception of the fault of duplicity which he was once guilty of as a child, this is the worst thing he is able to record of himself in the many letters of his which remain! Had he been conscious of any other he would have rejoiced to tell it, but, beyond his general self-accusations of ingratitude to God, his inutility, want of correspondence with the abundant grace he received, and the like, nothing is to be found.

A coincidence occurred during the first of these toilsome journeys which, although it had nothing wonderful in it, struck Boudon sufficiently to make him think it worth recording in a letter to M. Thomas. For forty-six years, in short ever since he was arch-deacon, he had, as we have observed, invariably made

his visitation round on horseback, whatever the weather might be, and during that whole time he had always had the same man for his guide, one whom he had himself selected, a baker of Evreux. Age and fatigue had told on both of them, in different ways, and when Boudon started on his tedious wheel-chair progress, he left his old companion lying on a bed of suffering. He had scarcely reached the house of a Curé where he was to dine, after making his first visitation, when he was seized in the court, before the entrance door, with one of his violent attacks. Unable in this state to get out of the chair, he begged the ecclesiastics who were with him to leave him where he was and go in to their dinner. For several hours he continued in an agony of torturing pain, and unable to stir. At last he was removed from his chair and laid upon a bed. On his return to Evreux, he found that the poor baker was dead ; moreover, that his death had occurred on the very day when he had himself been so dangerously ill, and that the cruel hours of suffering which he had endured in the courtyard of the Curé were precisely those during which his old associate had been passing through his mortal agony. Boudon was much touched by this circumstance, thinking that the pains which had so suddenly fallen upon him had been sent by God for the relief of the poor dying man, for which he did not fail to pour forth his grateful thanks.

Notwithstanding his courage and fortitude, the Archdeacon could not but be sensible that nature was refusing to second his heroic efforts ; and he was at last constrained to recognise therein a token that God no longer willed that he should *do*, and that his labour henceforth must be simply to *endure*. He was not unprepared for a sacrifice which it often costs pious souls

after a life of active good works an effort to make without repining. They are apt to complain of being now useless, as if any one were useful to God, to please whom we ought alone to act. There is not a trace of any such struggle in this holy man, who had stripped himself of every personal wish, however apparently holy. "There is another poverty in the order of God," he writes to M. Bosguérard, "which is admirable, and to which many poor in temporal means desire to have nothing to say. It is to do nothing when He so ordains it, or to do little when such is His will. 'The science of nothing,' said the late M. de Renty, 'is little known.' Nature always wishes to be active. Nevertheless, our Heavenly Master has given us such forcible instructions on this point by His hidden life for thirty years, that every one ought to feel them to be irresistible. Oh, Sir, we shall do great things when we do nothing but by His orders. We must let every personal will and desire die, however good it may be."* He had consented at the earnest entreaty of friends, and, in particular, of M. Bosguérard, to submit to one further attempt at contriving some alleviation of his sufferings, but the doctors soon perceived that anything which they could do, might, so far from bringing relief, only aggravate his complaint, and accelerate the end. He had, indeed, become so weak and so exquisitely sensitive, that he confessed that a finger could not touch him without causing him acute pain. The physicians therefore were fain to leave him alone, and Boudon now turned to God with fervent supplication for light to guide him in nominating a successor. His choice fell finally on M. Amey, a priest of the diocese of Bayeux and doctor

* Letter clxxxviii.

in theology of the Faculty at Caen. In announcing his decision to M. Bosguérard, he says, "I have had the glory of God alone in view, and never wish to have any other, in the resignation I have made to M. Amey, in consequence of the testimony which persons of merit have given me of his devotion to the most holy Virgin, of his sound doctrine, which is a thing to be most carefully looked to, especially in these days, of his probity, and his capacity for worthily discharging the duties of archdeacon. As for his want of birth, this is too human a consideration for me to allow it any weight, and in this I am persuaded I am right, since the Son of God paid no regard to it in the choice of His Apostles.

The resignation of Boudon is dated February, 1701, but, as it was not accepted until six months later, he thought himself bound, although his enfeebled state became daily worse, to make the spring visitations. He had recourse to a friend, M. Auberi, of Bayeux, to lend him a carriage, for the movement of the wheelchair had become quite insupportable to him; but, in spite of the greater easiness of conveyance thus obtained, the pain which he endured was so intense, and his consequent exhaustion so great, that the inhabitants of the parishes which he visited could not conceal from him their conviction that this was the last time they should behold him. And so it was; Boudon's evangelic labours were terminated by this last desperate effort, which few situated as he was would have attempted to make. M. Amey was installed on the 22d of the following August. As Boudon belonged to the diocese of Laon, his archdeaconship having stood him in lieu of a title, he had need of the acquiescence of its bishop in order to effect his resignation. In doing so,

he had requested that prelate's permission to finish his days without any benefice, as a poor priest "entirely abandoned to the loving care of Providence." The Bishop of Laon was much edified by this letter, and the disinterested spirit it displayed; he replied that he willingly granted his request, and returned thanks to God for having bestowed on his diocese a priest who to so much merit joined such perfect detachment from earthly goods.

If detachment from all temporal possessions is rare, still more rare is that poverty of spirit which separates the man completely from all secret appropriation of his own good works. This form of self-love is often imperceptible to the person who harbours it, but it will reveal itself unpleasantly in a certain feeling of vexation, a feeling not deliberately entertained, it is true, but unmistakably experienced when another easily succeeds and gives satisfaction where he himself has failed notwithstanding all his efforts. Boudon was free from all such temptations. He felt as much joy in beholding the fruit of another man's labour as in witnessing that of his own. If God was glorified he was satisfied. Self, with him, seemed forgotten. What had been the tenor of M. Bosguérard's observations concerning M. Amey's reception in the diocese does not appear, but we find Boudon making this reply: "I do not know what you mean when speaking of my successor's visits; but I can tell you what the Blessed Virgin has done, and I have good reasons for believing it. It is surprising to see how satisfied with him Messieurs our Curés are; they come to thank me, and those who gave me trouble give him none at all; on the contrary, they highly value him. He has

preached during his visitations with so much benediction that the people have been melted to tears. I have good reason to bless Divine Providence, which is, indeed, ever my most good and faithful mother."

CHAPTER XX.

BOUDON'S CONCLUDING DAYS AND DEATH.

ALTHOUGH debarred from all active exertion, Boudon did not cease to work for God. He published in the last year of his life his work of the *Chrétien Inconnu*, a book which must be dear to those who venerate the holy Archdeacon's memory, being the last which he ever wrote and therefore, so to say, the fruit of a long life passed in the practice of the most exalted piety; moreover, whether it were from the greater leisure which he had for writing during his closing years, or that he was desirous to bestow peculiar pains upon what he must have known to be the last homage of devotion which he would be able to offer to God, it is considered to have been composed with more care than his other works. Greater method is observed, and repetitions are not so frequent. The original manuscript, which was deposited in the Great Seminary of Evreux, contains many marginal corrections, as well as others in the body of the work, written in his own hand, that hand of the use of which he was soon to be almost entirely deprived. He at one time thought it doubtful whether he should be able to see the work in print before his death. His book on *Devotion to*



the Immaculate Mother of God, which he had published some years previously, had remained a long time in the hands of those who had been appointed to examine it, and, from a letter to M. Bosguérard, it appears that he apprehended a similar delay in the present instance. The same obstacles, however, did not exist. In the former publication he had vigorously refuted many works written by the Jansenists against devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God, and they had doubtless had a hand in obstructing its formal approbation; for it must be remembered that a large number of the clergy were more or less infected with the spirit which these heretics, whose ejection from her bosom cost the Church so many efforts, had laboured insidiously and with much ability to disseminate. But the *Chrétien Inconnu*, not being directed against the same errors, did not encounter the like difficulties, and saw the light in August, 1701.

Boudon's maladies had now become so complicated and his weakness so extreme that he was almost always obliged to avail himself of M. Chanoine's help when he wished to communicate with his friends. It seemed as if God would leave no part of his body exempt from suffering, even as in the days of his persecution no affection of his heart but was cruelly wounded; for all which he returns fervent thanks. We find him with touching humility noticing, in a letter to M. Bosguérard, the loving mercy of his Saviour in sending him many privations which saints had voluntarily embraced. If, he says, he were to ask whether it would not be well for him to watch in prayer during the whole or greater part of the night, and deny himself much in respect of nourishment, he would probably be advised not to attempt such things, but the good and merciful God

had taken this matter into His own hands. He makes similar observations in a letter to his friend, M. Thomas, bearing the date of February 22d, 1702,* where he marvels what he can have done to merit the grace of such abundant sufferings. They, he says, make a grievous mistake who do not carry the spirit of mortification, as far as possible, even in what is exterior. Who, however, he exclaims, would have counselled him voluntarily to adopt what Divine Providence imposes upon him in his 79th year? He was, in fact, hardly able either to sleep or to eat. Besides his habitual, distressing, and painful internal malady, he had now a violent cough with scarcely any intermission, swelled feet, which hardly permitted him to walk, disabling rheumatism in his arm, acute inflammation in his eyes, and gatherings in his ears. We seem to be reading a description of that patriarch of suffering, holy Job.

The closing months of the year 1701 and the commencement of 1702 passed in alternations of temporary improvement and serious relapses, each of which left him feebler than before. Infirmities, sickness, and pain, often excruciating, had, however, no power even to cloud his countenance or to affect his manner. How few there are who can resist making some outward demonstration of what they inwardly endure, some mute complaint even when agony does not wring from them an involuntary expression of suffering! Yet Boudon never drooped or betrayed sadness, for joy indeed was in his heart, and was manifested, not only in all he wrote, but in his unaffected replies to the

* Boudon's letters to M. Thomas, which extend over the last ten years of his life, are the only letters which have dates affixed, and these are believed to have been added by M. Thomas.

inquiries of friends. To the frequent question of, "Well, my good Monsieur, how does it fare with you to-day?" he would answer, in terms familiar to him, "Very badly, thank God; but may the Lord be blessed, His holy Mother, the good angels, and all the saints."

That which contributed mainly to fortify him was, on the one hand, the continual contemplation of his Crucified Lord, and, on the other, the ardent desire which possessed him to render his death, so far as possible, conformable to that of Jesus. "Ah," he exclaimed, "if it were given to me as to the pious Henry Suso, whose name I bear, after having so often said God alone, to have nothing at the moment of death but Him only in my miserable person; to live my own life no longer, but only that of Jesus Christ!* *Vivit vero in me Christus*—what a happiness! what a consolation! Oh, what a happy state is that in which Jesus Christ is all and in all things—*Christus omnia et in omnibus*!† Oh, with what a good will do I write and pronounce these words! O my divine Mother, make me no longer count the days of men—*Diem hominis non desideravi*.‡ I wish to say it with all my strength, and I will add, with another prophet, that, as the hart panteth after the water-springs, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.§ *Sitio, sitio, sitio*—I thirst, I thirst, I thirst. I have a burning thirst to possess Thee, my God, and from this thirst I desire not to be freed."

Up to the middle of March, except when under the immediate pressure of one of his attacks, which seem to have been often mercifully spared to him at that hour of the day, he was able still to drag himself to

* Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Jer. xvii. 16.

† Col. iii. 11.

§ Psalm xli. 2.

the cathedral to say Mass. Writing on the 12th of that month to M. Thomas, he says, "My maladies now allow me scarcely any liberty. Only Divine Providence permits me to offer the Most Adorable Sacrifice. After that, I do not leave my room, where I am often well exercised day and night, unable even to eat and deprived of all power of movement." It is related of him that the last time he was able to walk to the cathedral to say Mass, as he was returning home, he gave his shoes to a poor man who had none. Of this act he was well capable at any time, for by his alms he had full often himself embraced the state of destitution which he relieved, but, viewed in connection with this his last visit on foot to the Altar of God, it looked like a prophetic act. On the 17th of March, he had one of his fearful attacks, accompanied with violent pain and much fever, which refused to yield to remedies. On the 26th he requested that the Viaticum might be brought to him; this was done by the Canons of the cathedral, and on the following day we find him dictating a letter to M. Thomas, in which he speaks with joy and gratitude of the mercies of God towards him. "The Body of our Divine Saviour," he says, "is called with justice the Viaticum, because it furnishes us wherewithal to make the journey of eternity, and no other viaticum would suffice for this purpose; for, being measured and limited, it could not last for a journey without end. Here we are at the door of it, and I wish to bear witness to you, that, as we are but one body with our Saviour Jesus Christ, death does not divide us, but only unites the more."

As the hour drew nigh for him to leave his friends on earth, Boudon's tender charity for them seemed to burn with a special brightness. Never had he appeared

more solicitous for their welfare than now, when the shadow of death was encompassing him, and the all-absorbing thought of eternity was filling his soul. He was particularly anxious to comfort those who looked up to him as their spiritual guide, and who could not reconcile themselves to the idea of losing him. He strove to persuade them that, when he was gone, Providence would know well how to procure them other means of assistance and other instruments of their sanctification. But there was no one for whom his solicitude manifested itself more touchingly than for the aged M^{me}. Henri, whom the prospect of his death had cast into the deepest affliction. The reader will remember how Boudon in his very boyhood had acted as the guardian angel of this poor creature, then a young unprotected servant in the house where he and his school-fellows boarded. He had never lost sight of her, and many letters addressed by him to her have been preserved. They show how kindly he always provided for her temporal wants, and with what unwearied care he watched over the still more important concerns of her soul; and now that she was going to lose her lifelong benefactor and guide, he endeavoured to lead her to a loving acquiescence in the will of God whatever it might be, telling her how it would grieve him should she depart this life without having made the sacrifice of his. "Do so at once, my dear daughter," he says, "and that with all your heart. The Blessed Virgin made the sacrifice of her own Son, who was God, and as He was hanging on a cross. Say to the Lord, 'My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready.'* I offer Thee the sacrifice of Thy servant's life, as of all else. Do that for three days in honour of the Most Holy Trinity, under the protection

* Psalm lvi. 8.

of the good angels and the saints. Trample nature under foot, which will oppose itself with its reasonings, telling you that another will not take the same care of you as I have done. But who is it, my dear daughter, who gives me these movements of charity for you, if it be not Divine Providence? Is It not all-powerful to give them equally to others? I assure you on Its part with all confidence that, if you survive me, you will be as well cared for as you have been hitherto." As respected her temporal necessities Boudon had already provided, by recommending her to the charity of M. Thomas, to whom he left the legacy of several of his good works. He could not leave them in better or more trustworthy hands.

All seemed now to mark the approach of the moment when Boudon would no longer be able to serve his friends save by his intercession before the throne of God. It is remarkable how, as if to satisfy his love for poverty and his longing desire to die in a state of neglect and privation, he was—as we should say, accidentally—deprived of the care and attention which then more than ever were necessary to him. M^{me}. de Rouves, herself failing in health, had devoted her last efforts to arranging Boudon's room and adorning it to the best of her ability in preparation for our Lord's visit to him in the Holy Viaticum. She had her reward in the edifying spectacle which his fervent communion offered to her, a sight which drew tears from the eyes of several of the Canons who had accompanied the Blessed Sacrament when It was brought to him. In the following month she preceded him to the tomb. A short time after, M^{me}. Lefèvre fell ill, and M^{lle}. d'Outrebois, whose ministrations might have supplied for this double loss, was detained by the sickbed of a

sister. After a while, however, M^{me}. Lefèvre was sufficiently recovered, although still in a very suffering state, to be again in attendance on her revered and dying friend. In reporting his state of abandonment to M. Thomas, Boudon, as usual, instead of deploring it, was content to be more entirely consigned to the care of Divine Providence. Speaking of and declining a charitable offer of linen made to him by M^{lle}. Opportune, one of M. Thomas's daughters, he adds, "My great riches is to have nothing, and that nothing is more precious to me than all the goods of earth." Nevertheless, he asks one thing. "You see, Monsieur," he says, "the great need I have of prayers, particularly to the Mother of Mercy, to her blessed spouse, St. Joseph, and to the good angels, for without special mercies we might say what the Apostle once said, that 'we were even weary of life.'* Nevertheless we abide through the goodness of God in great tranquillity." He mentions in the same letter that Divine Providence had sent him a substitute for what had been taken away, in the person of a good ecclesiastic who acted as his secretary, and had watched by his bedside until one o'clock the previous night. This was M. Chanoine, to whom allusion has already been made. Boudon himself expected little from the skill of the physicians, whose attempts to ameliorate his condition had not only signally failed but had often helped to aggravate his sufferings. Nevertheless, when once he was placed in their hands, he obeyed them as his masters for the time being. "Twenty kinds of medicine," says his historian Collet, "which had served only to keep him in bed whole months † did not prevent him from taking

* 2 Cor. i. 8.

† We have Boudon's own testimony to this having happened,

fresh ones, precisely because he was ordered to do so. To satisfy his doctors, he even consented to mortify his spirit of mortification by eating some fruit which he had for twenty years denied himself, and this out of pure obedience to their behests. The months of April and May passed in the manner described, that is, in a succession of seizures, each of which brought him into proximate danger of death. He received the Viaticum seven times during his last illness. He used to dread being hindered by the violent cough which night and day racked his feeble body, but no sooner did the Blessed Sacrament enter his room than it would cease altogether.

On the first day of June, our Lady, his good Mother, obtained for him, as later on he relates to M. Thomas, the grace of making his communion, which at Easter he had been unable to do, in the cathedral. He was carried thither, but his condition immediately grew worse, and on the 7th it was not believed that he would survive the night. Extreme Unction was administered to him at eight o'clock in the morning, after which he dictated a few lines to M. Thomas, but, as is so often the case, subsequently to the reception of that sacrament, which is the healing medicine of body as well as of soul, he rallied sufficiently to give his friends hopes that something might yet be done to procure him relief and prolong his days. His pains abated, and he was able to eat, although his weakness continued to be so excessive that he was unable even to stand for a moment without at least, on one occasion. Writing to Mère Elisabeth de Sainte Marie, a Feuillantine nun, towards the close of his life, after thanking her for a remedy she desired to send him, he adds, "I have had remedies sent me from Paris which made me keep my bed for a month, and that without any benefit;" my help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Letter xxxiv.

support. This we learn from his letters to M. Thomas, from which we also gather that his friend was very desirous that he should see a surgeon from Rouen. The author of the *Vie Nouvelle* says that it was the same eminent practitioner whom M. Bosguérard had formerly persuaded him to consult, and that he was very urgent on the present occasion also.* It was hoped that, although the malady could not be cured, a bandage might be made to afford him support. Boudon doubted the possibility, for the most skilful surgeons in Paris had given up a similar attempt on a former occasion, and the extraordinary sensibility of his miserable body rendered, he said, all pressure very painful, and possibly dangerous. This extreme sensitiveness gives him occasion here to remember the extraordinary delicacy of the Adorable Body of our Lord, to whose sufferings he was ever striving to conform his own, a delicacy which must have caused Him to endure unimagined pain; one stroke of the scourge inflicting more torture than would twenty or thirty stripes in the case of another. After this digression, he returns to his own case, and says that he has resolved, in view of the reasons alleged, to defer the visit of the operator until after the feast of

* There is no letter to this effect in the published collection given by Migne, but, as the author of the *Vie Nouvelle* had access to all the unpublished papers, it may exist in manuscript. It may be as well, perhaps, to mention here that, in a note appended to the collection of Boudon's letters to M. Bosguérard, it is stated that the latter died in 1701, and that a letter to M. Thomas informs him of the occurrence. This, however, must be a mistake, for not only is no trace to be found in Boudon's published letters of a loss which must have been so distressing to him, but it is in direct opposition to the statement made in the text on the authority of the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, who had examined all the existing documents. Add to which, that, had Bosguérard preceded Boudon to the tomb, the papers of the latter could never have passed into his hands.

the Assumption. This would afford leisure to have recourse to prayer. "Continue, if you please, Monsieur," he writes, "to pray and obtain prayers, for truly our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Under the maternal protection of His Immaculate Virgin-Mother, of the good angels and saints, particularly our own guardian angels, of the seven first Princes, of St. Joseph, St. Joachim, St. Anne, of all our Lord's holy kindred, and of the angels who ever watched round the Holy Child Jesus, I have almost resolved not to send for him (the surgeon), but I shall seek advice." This letter was written on the 11th of July, and ten days later we find him relieved from all embarrassment on the subject, in consequence of the opinion expressed by one experimentally acquainted with the nature of his malady, and well qualified to speak with confidence on the subject, to the effect that in his particular case the proposed remedy would be utterly useless. He now found himself, with joy inexpressible, committed wholly into the hands of Divine Providence. All human means having failed he could now say with truth God Alone, God Alone in the union of Jesus Christ.

If Boudon's sufferings and the near approach of death did not interfere with his charitable solicitude for those who had been dependent on him for alms, spiritual and temporal, it may well be believed that neither did they cause him to relax in the liveliest interest for all that concerned the good of the Church; but, perhaps, nothing is more remarkable in the letters written or, rather, dictated during these last days of his life than the quiet manner in which they enter into particulars, whether concerning ecclesiastical matters or those of spiritual moment to individuals,

and the like, descending even to ordinary details, such as directions for the binding of books. Except where he alludes to his maladies or his coming end, there is scarcely a perceptible difference in the tone or contents of these letters and those which he wrote at any previous time. He notices, according to his usual custom, not the festivals only, but all the special commemorations as they occur in the ecclesiastical year, and every holy memory which each day recalls. For instance, little more than a month before his death, he concludes with these words, which mark also his great devotion to the kindred of Jesus and the manner in which he always honoured the guardian angel of each saint in union with the saint himself:—

“At Evreux, this 27th of July, the day after that on which we celebrated the feast of St. Anne, whom I still continue to honour to-day, and whom I hope to continue to honour to-morrow, with the divine help, and also the glorious patriarch St. Joachim, her spouse. Divine Providence has shown that in great sufferings and trials It gives us St. Joachim as a protector; it is well to have a singular devotion to him and to his holy angel.” In a subsequent letter we find him rejoicing to hear that a good priest had been offering a solemn Mass in honour of that incomparable saint, as he calls him. Again, in another letter he says, “I am writing to you on the 6th of August, the vigil of my great feast of St. Cajetan, who had nothing, and asked for nothing.” And in the last short letter which he dictated to M. Thomas two days before his death, in which he mentions that he had been surprised to see his room filled with people who had come to see him as a dying man, he does not omit the customary conclusion, marking that he was as much alive as ever

to the memory and presence of the beatified, in whose society and that of the holy angels he had ever lived: "Evreux, this 28th of August, the feast day of St. Augustine, and within the octave of the death of Père Gabriel-Marie, so devoted to the Blessed Virgin, and of the precious death of Sœur Gabrielle Coste, who excelled in devotion to the holy angels and who was the first lay-sister of the Visitation."

Those were troublous times for the Church in which Boudon lived, and in which he was dying. We have not alluded to them further than was necessary for the understanding of his personal history and of his peculiar vocation. He seems to have been specially raised up to combat one of the most pernicious effects of the spirit of Jansenism, a chilling and a grudging restriction of devotion to the Blessed Mother of God, nay more, a discouragement of it in quarters commonly regarded as orthodox. To the very close of his days we find him still engaged in this work, and in a letter to M. Thomas, dated "the 15th of May, being the vigil of the feast of St. Simon Stock, the great saint of the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel," he writes, from his bed of suffering, that it has come into his mind to form a holy association of servants of the Blessed Virgin in different provinces and towns who should join in maintaining devotion to her, and in mutually aiding each other by advice and combined action to destroy whatever is opposed to her and uphold whatever conduces to her glory. A letter which he had received from a good priest belonging to a community at Angers, who was personally unknown to him, but who had written to him as to one whom he considered to be devout to our Lady, gave him much pleasure and encouragement in this design. Two days

previously he had dictated, after a night of very great pain, to the same friend, M. Thomas, a long letter, in the course of which he bitterly deploras the appointment of a principal to the College of Evreux who, from being infected with the spirit of the Jansenistic party, was strongly opposed to devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and to the doctrine of her Immaculate Conception. A congregation of our Lady had been established at the college similar to those which the Jesuit Fathers had formed in so many places, and much spiritual advantage had been derived from it to the students who had enrolled themselves as members. The principal was, however, craftily labouring to destroy it, thwarting the young men in their pious exercises and telling them that they ought to frequent their parish church instead. In vain they represented that they would repair thither after performing the devotions of their Congregation; nothing could disarm his hostility, to the great distress of the most zealous among their number. The college, subjected to the direction of a man of this stamp, was falling into a lamentable state, and Boudon begs his friend to have the circumstance generally made known, cautioning him, however, not to name him as his informant. This was out of consideration for his bishop, who, it seems, had not only appointed the person in question to this post, but had promoted him to one of the first dignities of the cathedral, a proceeding which, Boudon adds, would meet with opposition. Evidently these appointments were acts of private favour, for this individual had been tutor in the Comte de Novion's family, where, however, it would seem he had taken care to hide his views; and, as Boudon says that he knew him when there, without knowing him, and that

when he was living in the Comte de Novion's house he believes that he was not reputed to belong to the Jansenistic party, it may be reasonably concluded that the Bishop also was in ignorance of the pernicious opinions held by the priest whom up to that time he had continued to patronise.

Boudon's correspondence with M. Bosguérard bears the same testimony to the anxiety he experienced at this period from the spread of false doctrine. He noted a kind of semi-Calvinism taking root, which hereafter, he declared, would have the worst effect, for men secretly infected with this heresy would behave like those Arians of old who maintained an apparent exterior union with the Church. This semi-Calvinistic spirit was closely connected with that of hostility to the Blessed Mother of God, which was never absent, he said, in those who were agitated by the spirit of the devil, and displayed particular activity in certain priests, who were publicly putting forth the strangest propositions on this subject. Elsewhere, after speaking with profound disesteem of mere natural talents, which God, he says, holds of such small account as to leave them to His enemies the devils, he says, "The person you mention to me possesses these natural talents, but I much fear that he is not sound in doctrine. It is lamentable how novel doctrines are every day establishing themselves."

All that concerned the interests of God not only affected him as strongly to the very end, but his language during the closing weeks of his life with reference to it has lost none of its former energy. "It is not sufficient," he writes to M. Thomas, "not to be animated with hostility to the Church, but men ought to be filled with a holy zeal generously to oppose

all its adversaries. All Christians are united with Jesus Christ, but especially the pastors of His Church, who ought, in His strength and in His zeal, to set themselves to fight vigorously against all that may be contrary to purity of doctrine, and that without human respect or reservation. The consultation you tell me of is very saddening! I cannot imagine how persons of sound doctrine could sign such a resolution.”* He looked with pain on the disregard manifested for the interests of Christ and of His Church by the great mass of men and by the powers of the world; and he gives, as an example, the close alliance of the Emperor, from motives of secular policy, with England and Holland, States which had in view, besides their own particular interests, those of their false religion. On all this he meditated in his solitude, and then his zeal is moved to pray for those heretical lands. Unable to do anything in his retreat, “I have thought,” he says, “of addressing myself to the Sacred Humanity, to the glorious Virgin, to the angels, and to the saints, praying them to unite with my miserable person for the interests of God Alone, calling particularly on the saints who have lived in England and in Holland, on the good angels who formerly guarded them, and on those who are now the tutelary protectors of those countries and of their inhabitants, but invoking especially the aid of the seven highest angelic Princes, St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the four others, begging them to unite with my miserable person for the interests of God Alone. This consoles me in my

* Boudon is referring to a discussion which had been revived at that time concerning what was called the *Cas de Conscience*, viz., the lawfulness of a mere respectful silence in regard to the doctrinal decisions of the Holy See.

solitude; every morning, unable to leave my room, I unite myself to Jesus Christ immolated wherever the Divine Sacrifice of the Mass is offered, I offer Him in honour of all the intentions which I have here enumerated, praying the Eternal Father to look upon His well-beloved Son and the interests of His Church, and to humble its enemies. I entreat all these saints and angels to join together in prayer that the Kingdom of God may come, particularly to these heretics, and I beg St. Michael, who is the special patron of France, to come to its aid and, with the other six chief Princes, to go throughout the realm and defeat the efforts of the enemies of God and of His holy Mother."

Such were the occupations of his mind as he lay on his bed of death, never ceasing, until he drew his last breath, to deplore that spirit of revolt which he beheld at work, and which before long was to produce such fatal fruits. The words he addressed to his friend Bosguérard read almost like a prophecy. "We live in unhappy times," he says, "and they who shall come after us will see strange things, of which these are but the prelude: with this prospect death seems sweet." A few days before his departure, Boudon was to receive one of those drops of consolation which had come at rare intervals in his life of suffering and dereliction. The venerable Bishop of Bayeux, Mgr. de Nesmond,* passing through Evreux at this time, would not deny himself the edification of witnessing the patience and resignation of this just man. With the ecclesiastics who accompanied him, he sought out the miserable chamber in which Boudon lay, but which to this holy prelate seemed like a hallowed sanctuary. They all

* François de Nesmond, a prelate of much virtue, who occupied the see of Bayeux for more than fifty years. He died in 1715.

knelt, and then the Bishop prayed that God would soon crown the fidelity of His servant. After which he conversed with him on those subjects which he knew were near and dear to his heart; of the Blessed Virgin, of the angels and saints for whose heavenly assistance in his last hours he had such good grounds to hope. The good Bishop's words were words of Christian tenderness as well as of edification, and he left the dying servant of God embalmed with their sweetness.

The violent and painful seizures by which Boudon had so long been tried, ceased altogether before his death, but the utter prostration of strength into which he fell was its sure harbinger. Nevertheless, he said his office down to the Saturday which preceded his death; and, when he could no longer do so, he had some relics of saints whom he specially honoured brought to him, to help in arming him for the final conflict. Nothing, however, was permitted to trouble the close of this holy man's days. The enemy of souls, to whom through life he had so studiously denied the least corner of his mind or heart by filling all with God alone, was kept far from him in death. From sheer feebleness his thoughts would seem to wander a little now and then, but it was but necessary to speak to him of God to see his spirit revive, proving that, although the body was sinking, the soul had lost nothing of its fervour. During one of those swoons when he no longer gave any external sign of life, the report of his death having got abroad in the vicinity, a number of persons hastened to his sick room to gaze on the remains of one so holy, and, perhaps, with the desire of obtaining something which had belonged to him, by way of a relic. Boudon opened his eyes, and, seeing the room full of people, the one idea which had pos-

essed him through life inspired him with a wish to address them, but his tongue was too much swollen to permit of his speaking ; he could only stammer forth these words to M. de Chanoine, who was at his bedside : “ Tell the persons here that I exhort them with all my heart to love and serve God fervently, and that in the land of God Alone whither I am going, every one will be compelled by force or by love to acknowledge that this was all which they had to do in this world.” This great and consoling thought, upon which his soul had fed all the days of his life, filled him with peace to the last, and it was after murmuring that he desired God Alone that, without passing through any agony, and without a struggle, he calmly gave up his soul into the hands of his Lord on Thursday, the 31st day of August, 1702, being then in the 79th year of his age.

CHAPTER XXI.

HONOURS PAID TO BOUDON AFTER HIS DEATH.

A FEW minutes before expiring, Boudon had begged M. Chanoine to apprise his friends of his death, that they might pray for his soul, a charge of which that priest acquitted himself the next day, writing the following letter to M. Thomas :—“ It is no longer the holy M. Boudon who writes to you, but a miserable and insignificant priest, whom, while living, he charitably suffered to remain near his person, and who is now discharging a duty which he laid upon him, when dying, namely to recommend him to the prayers of his

friends in Jesus Christ : this is why I have the honour of writing this letter to you, in order to tell you that he died filled with the same zeal for the establishment of the reign of God Alone in him with which through life he had always been animated. He said to me, on the evening of the day preceding his death, that he felt his heart overflowing with the desire to serve God with all his strength and better than he had hitherto done ; and yesterday he expired in my arms, after testifying with his last breath that he desired nothing but God Alone. Messieurs our Canons have interred him as one of themselves, notwithstanding all his love for poverty, the gentlemen of the Seminary and those of the Chapter having disputed much which should possess him ; however, he was finally buried in the chapel where he always celebrated the divine mysteries, although this is contrary to the custom of the Cathedral of Evreux, which inters its dignitaries in front of a particular altar of the Blessed Virgin, and the other Canons before their respective chapels. The crowd was so great, pressing into his room as soon as his death became known, that there was scarcely time to arrange him on the palliase of his bed, in order to permit the people who came from all quarters to pay him their last respects. Children and grown-up persons alike kissed his feet, and it was with great difficulty that at ten o'clock in the evening the room could be cleared of all its occupants, who were never wearied of gazing on him, touching him with their hands or with their handkerchiefs, prayer-books, scapulars, rosaries, linen, and other things. I must inform you also that, in order to satisfy Messieurs of the Chapter and of the Seminary, the gentlemen of the Seminary have received his heart, and the body was taken to Notre

... that to some persons who saw that they
 are... their... We
 are... of our...
 ... : but as
 it was... to being...
 ... he...
 ... in order to
 make... that you may
 have... although we have
 ... I will use the liberty of writing what I
 shall..."

It will seem that it was M. Chanoine who caused
 the engraving to be made from this portrait, such as
 shows the resemblance to some of Boudon's Lives.
 The engraving bears much resemblance to a crayon like-
 ness still in existence, which is probably the identical
 drawing here alluded to by M. Chanoine. The author
 of the *Le Nivelle* regrets that he who executed it, and
 who must have known M. Boudon well, should have
 scrupulously represented the face with all the rigidity
 of death. We have thus lost what contemporaries
 testify he possessed to the last, notwithstanding his
 emaciation, the gracious expression which animated
 the delicate features of the living countenance, and
 have but the representation of a wasted corpse. This
 is the sole portrait which, apparently, was ever taken.
 Certainly M. Chanoine had none in his possession,
 for, in a touching letter which he wrote to a Parisian
 nun after Boudon's death, he says, "As for me, when
 any one inquires if I have not got a portrait of M.
 Boudon, I take a paper and write on it these two
 words: 'God Alone,' saying, 'Come, read, and see; this
 is his true portrait.'" The Eudists seem to have had

all the better title to his remains that the holy Archdeacon had himself bequeathed them to the Seminary in a will which he executed eight days before his death. This will is still preserved in the Seminary of Evreux, and bears in the handwriting visible proof of the difficulty with which it was written. It is so thoroughly characteristic that we here insert it. "We, Henri-Marie Boudon, heretofore Archdeacon of Evreux, declare that our last determination, notwithstanding the inclinations which we should have had to be buried with the poor, supposing that it had not seemed good that we should be hung upon a gibbet, is to be interred with Messieurs the Seminarists of the precious Heart of the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, at the entrance of their church, under the stone steps, that we may be constantly trodden under foot. Done this 23d of August, being the feast day of St. Philip Benizi, religious, worthy servant of the glorious Mother of God, and one of her Apostles, 1702. Signed, Boudon." The obsequies were performed on the day following his decease, and he was laid in the Chapel of the Holy Angels,* at the foot of the altar. His heart was placed inside a pillar, close to the Chapel of St. Francis de Sales, in the church of the Seminary.

If Boudon living had been first persecuted and calumniated, and then in a great measure neglected, like one forgotten and passed out of mind, at least in that very place where he ought to have been best known and most highly honoured, his death was the

* It had been previously to Boudon's time called the Chapel of St. Jacques. The association which he established there in honour of the Holy Angels was the occasion of its name being changed. Here was his confessional, and here he always said Mass.

signal for a complete revulsion in public opinion. It was not his friends only who lamented his loss as one which they never hoped to replace, but those who had failed to profit by his example while living, and who had even ignored and turned away from it, were now loud in proclaiming that the Church had just lost one of those rare and perfect men whom God in His mercy bestows on her for her ornament and edification. The praise awarded and the regrets expressed were universal without distinction of persons. The veil which had shrouded him seemed to be lifted up, and all alike, friends, persons hitherto indifferent, nay, they who had been hostile to him, confessed the irresistible might of virtue; so that even one of his former persecutors was seen begging with tears in his eyes for something which had belonged to the saintly departed. From all quarters letters poured in to Evreux making similar requests. The Duchess of Bavaria desired to have his scapular, and many other persons of note esteemed it a high honour to obtain anything which had been his. The Carmelites of Pont Audemer placed his portrait in a little oratory, to invoke him in their needs and beg of him to be a father to them in Heaven, as he had been on earth. M. du Puys, a Jesuit missionary, passing through Evreux some days after Boudon's death, desired to go and pray in the room where he had breathed his last, and kissed the floor with the deepest reverence. It is almost needless to say that the grief of the numerous communities who felt themselves indebted so largely to his spiritual labours amongst them—not to speak of all those devout persons who for many years had looked to him for the guidance of their souls—was unbounded. One opinion, however, universally prevailed, that he was

gone straight to glory, so that, if they had lost an inestimable friend and director on earth, they had at least obtained another powerful patron in Heaven, and one whose exceeding charity would not suffer him to forget them. An excellent religious, writing to one of his relatives to console her for the loss of this holy priest, who had been her director, said, "To sorrow for M. Boudon's decease, my dear cousin, would be to regret the happiness and repose which his soul enjoys. The loss which you and many others experience is nothing in comparison with that which the Church has suffered. But, after having consumed his days for her, it is very just that God should recompense him eternally. Most of the persons whom I desired to offer prayers for the repose of his soul, have told me that he did not need them. Console yourself, then, my cousin, for your loss, although it is great, and hope that God will supply for the want of him, and draw you to Himself when you shall have finished your course."

Amongst the friends whom Boudon left behind, a few of the old companions of his studies and first imitators of his piety still survived. Amongst these Mgr. de Melian, who had occupied the see of Alet and who had been Boudon's fellow-student, used to love to relate how, even in those early days, he never talked to them on any other subject but God Alone and devotion to the Blessed Virgin; and then he used to add that that worthy priest had done great services to the Church. But no one rendered a more touching testimony to his merit than his old friend, Mgr. de Laval, the Bishop of Quebec. In his letter to M. Thomas, after congratulating him on being within reach of the grave of the dear departed one, whither he could repair

to beg his intercession in behalf of those whom he had left on earth, he added, "I desire, above all, that you would ask for me some share of that lively faith and entire abandonment to God which he so richly possessed. His life was a perfect imitation of that of Jesus Christ; may God grant me the grace to copy him as much as I honour him!" One of the most celebrated Curés of Paris, a doctor of Sorbonne and former professor of theology, having read the short eulogium placed at the foot of Boudon's portrait, said that one praise, as just as it was essential, had been forgotten, and that was his inviolable attachment to the doctrine of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church. "And this," he says, "because in these times it is a great merit for a man so enlightened to have a submission such as his to the decisions of the Holy See." We have a right, indeed, to regard Boudon as a kind of martyr to his attachment to the doctrine and decrees of Holy Church speaking through her Head, for the cruel persecution under which he suffered for so many years had its origin in the animosity which it earned for him amongst the innovators and their adherents.

For a considerable number of years the veneration felt for the memory of Boudon attracted many devout persons to his tomb, their confidence being excited by the example of his friends, who from all parts of France resorted to Evreux to pay their homage to his mortal remains, and by the testimony of not a few who declared that they had received signal graces through his intercession.* But after the death of those who had personally known him this resort diminished, men

* Collet mentions several miracles, which he considered to be well attested, worked by the intercession of Boudon in relief of maladies affecting the mind, as well as the body; but, as the

ceased to speak of his virtues, or of the credit he possessed with God, and thus the remembrance of him gradually passed away, so that from 1720 to 1740 neglect and forgetfulness had once more become his portion in Evreux, and his tomb was deserted. It was then that God put it into the heart of some pious individuals to repair this wrong, and revive the honour of this great servant of God. M^{lle}. Pannier, whose faith and charity caused her to be highly esteemed in this city, and to be regarded as a model of Christian virtue, was acquainted in her youth with persons who had been directed by Boudon, and who had preserved as relics his instruments of penance. Touched with her piety, they had bequeathed this precious deposit to her care, and M^{lle}. Pannier's reverence for it had been fed by the daily study of Boudon's works. The more, however, she became penetrated with his doctrine, the more she regretted to see this apostle of God Alone ignored and forgotten. She sought out other pious souls to share her sorrow, and, unforeseen circumstances having brought her into communication with a Prior of the Discalced Carmelites of Lyons, she found in him an entire sympathy and a great desire to aid in this good work. Nothing as yet seemed to promise that their hopes were on the eve of realisation, when the superior of the Seminary of Evreux received a letter which the Marquis de Forbin Sainte-Croix addressed to him from Avignon, begging him to send him something which had belonged to the holy Boudon, whose works had long formed the subject of his devout meditations.

author of the *Vié Nouvelle* had no access to the certificates furnished to that historian, and as, moreover, the cures had not been tested by any juridical process, he forbore to insert them in his own work.

Persuaded that a priest of such heroic sanctity must live in the memory of the Church and people of Evreux, he desired also to have a reply to some particular inquiries which he sent, as well as a likeness of him. The superior communicated the contents of this letter to M^{lle}. Pannier, who hastened to send the applicant some of the objects left in her charge. These were received with the utmost gratitude, and M. de Forbin Sainte-Croix expressed his conviction that God would not fail to make known anew to the faithful one whom he regarded as a great saint, and a model well calculated to renew their fervour.

This anticipation was speedily realised. M. de Bournainville, the superior just mentioned, and M^{lle}. Pannier received before long the gratifying information that Boudon's works, which, if one may so express it, had quite gone out of fashion, were now once more sought for with eagerness, so that several Parisian booksellers were issuing new editions. The person who had revived in the capital the taste for these writings was a M. de Mirabeau, who, like the Marquis de Forbin Sainte-Croix, had been long conversant with them. He, too, wrote to M. de Bournainville requesting relics of the holy man. It was through his encouragement that the publishers had ventured on fresh editions; and, to get the books better known, he had himself bought and distributed many copies. His letter testified to the zeal which animated him to extend devotion to the great Archdeacon, and to the strong confidence which he felt in the might of his intercession. He would have wished all afflicted persons to have recourse to God and to His holy Mother through him, and he did not entertain the smallest doubt but that this salutary practice must be common in Evreux. What

was his disappointment when, on visiting that city by the invitation of a priest acquainted with M^{lle}. Pannier, he discovered that, not only was the tomb which he came to venerate unfrequented, but that even its locality was unknown to the greater number of the inhabitants, and that no one thought of taking Boudon for a model or of begging his intercession. To repair this indifference he desired, in concert with M^{lle}. Pannier, to decorate the place of his interment, as well as that in which his heart had been deposited, and to have a Life of the saintly man written. A tablet of black marble, with a white border in the same material, was placed on the 12th of May, 1751, in the Chapel of the Seminary, where his heart reposed, with the following inscription:—

J. M. J.
Soli Deo.
Hic quiescit
Cor
Venerabilis Sacerdotis HENRICI-MARIÆ BOUDON,
Doctoris theologi, Archidiaconi Ebroicensis ;
Cor
Jesu et Mariæ immaculatæ et SS. angelis
Devotissimum
In variis tribulationibus patientissimum,
In charitate perfectum.
Pretiosum depositum
Huic templo Sacratissimo Cordi dicato legavit moriens
Vir juxta Cor Dei,
Cui semper in mente, in ore, in scriptis,
Solutus Deus, solus Deus, solus Deus.
Obiit pridie Kalendas Septembris
Anno N. D. MDCCII. ætatis LXXIX.

Cœur de M. Boudon, en qui l'amour divin a triomphé par la Croix.

J. M. J.

To God Alone,

Here rests the Heart

Of the venerable priest, HENRI-MARIE BOUDON,

Doctor of theology, Archdeacon of Evreux ;

A heart most devoted

To Jesus and Immaculate Mary and the holy angels,

In divers tribulations most patient,

In charity perfect.

This precious deposit,

A man according to the Heart of God

Bequeathed, when dying, to this temple dedicated to

The Most Sacred Heart,

Having ever in his mind, in his mouth, in his writings,

God Alone, God Alone, God Alone.

He died on August 31st, in the year of our Lord 1702 and the
79th of his age.

*The heart of M. Boudon, in whom divine love triumphed by the
Cross.*

The workmen, having cut into the pillar for the purpose
of affixing the epitaph, found a square leaden urn with
the following inscription :—

Hâc urnâ requiescit

Cor

Venerabilis admodum viri Domini HENRICI-MARIE BOUDON,

Magni Ebroicensis Ecclesiæ Archidiaconi.

Obiit anno 1702, Augusti 31.

In this urn reposes

The heart

Of the very venerable man, HENRI-MARIE BOUDON,

Archdeacon of the Church of Evreux.

He died on August 31st, 1702.

This urn contained a heart of silver, encasing that
of Boudon. The Eudists kept it in their sacristy until
it could be restored to its former place. During that

brief interval M^{lle}. Pannier, on going to pay her devout homage to the heart of her holy patron, received a favour which she had merited alike by her virtues and the interest she had taken in his memory. Holding in her hands this precious relic, a fragrance so exquisite and potent issued from it that she was constrained to set it down, her senses being quite overpowered by its sweetness. At the same moment she was freed from a painful ailment which had distressed her for some days. A Vicaire of the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris, M. Le Blanc, who had come to Evreux to honour the heart of Boudon, had a similar experience, which, however, he attributed in the first instance to the presence, as he supposed, of some strong perfumes in the box. But when he learned, on that same evening, that none except himself and M^{lle}. Pannier had perceived any sweet odour on drawing near to the holy relic, he could not but recognise therein a supernatural occurrence.

M. de Mirabeau and M^{lle}. Pannier now applied to Mgr. de Rochechouart, Bishop of Evreux, who was soon after translated to Bayeux, entreating him to seek out some competent person to compose the Life of Evreux's saintly Archdeacon. That prelate entered warmly into their desire, and wrote on the subject to M. Collet, who commenced the work almost immediately, and published the result of his labours in the year 1753. To him also we owe the epitaph placed on the panelling of the Chapel of the Holy Angels, facing Boudon's tomb, which runs thus :—

Deo soli
 Se suaque opera dum viveret dicavit
 HENRICUS-MARIA BOUDON, Archid. Ebroic.,
 Ab infantia
 Pauperum pater et socius,

Divinæ Providentiæ alumnus et præco,
 Immaculatæ Virginis cliens, deinde vindex,
 Angelorum æmulus et cultor ;
 Deo soli
 Laboribus, scriptis, sermonibus, itineribus,
 Ad annos usque LXXIX.,
 Per infamiam et bonam famam,
 Ut seductor et verax,
 Zelo zelatus est, et immolatus
 Supra sacrificium et obsequium fidei suæ ;
 Spe gaudens, orationi instans,
 Obdormivit in Domino die xxxi Augusti, MDCCII.,
 Et in hoc jacens sacello suis decorato studiis
 Defunctus adhuc loquitur,
 Librisque pietatem spirantibus
 Docet quam bonum sit adhærere
 Deo soli.

Pour Dieu Seul.

C'est à lui que s'est consacré pendant sa vie, et qu'à offert
 toutes ses actions,
 HENRI-MARIE BOUDON, Archidiacre d'Evreux.

To God Alone

HENRI-MARIE BOUDON, Archdeacon of Evreux,
 Dedicated himself and his works throughout his life.
 From childhood

Father and companion of the poor,
 Pupil and proclaimer of Divine Providence,
 Client and vindicator of the Immaculate Virgin,
 Emulator and worshipper of the Angels ;
 For God Alone
 In labours, writings, preachings, journeys,
 Until his 79th year,
 Through evil report and good report,
 As deceiver and yet true,
 He was consumed with zeal and immolated
 On the sacrifice and obedience of his faith ;
 Rejoicing in hope, instant in prayer,
 He slept in the Lord on the 31st day of August, 1702,
 And, lying in this chapel adorned by his devotion,

Though dead still speaketh,
 And by his piety-breathing books
 Teacheth how good it is to cling
 To God Alone.

“To God Alone HENRI-MARIE BOUDON, Archdeacon of Evreux, consecrated himself during life and offered all his actions.”

Upon the tomb itself is the following inscription in French:—

Here réposes
 HENRI-MARIE BOUDON, Archdeacon of Evreux,
 Humble and learned in the science of the saints,
 For the honour of God Alone.
 He was zealous, poor, patient.
 He honoured Mary and the holy angels,
 And died in the Lord August 31st, 1702,
 Aged 78 years, seven months, and seventeen days,
 In memoria æterna erit justus.* Ps. cxi.

From this epoch, up to the disastrous times of the Revolution, Boudon's memory continued to be revered at Evreux, and his books to be valued and extensively read, but those sad days caused his tomb to be deserted, and the altars near which his mortal remains reposed were desecrated. His relics, however, escaped profanation, for his grave in the Chapel of the Angels was never touched, and his heart remained walled up safely in the former Chapel of the Seminary, now converted into a criminal tribunal. No one ever gave it a thought. Some years after the restoration of religion in France, Mgr. Bourlier, who had been called to the see of Evreux,† resolved to remove it from a position in which

* “The just man shall be in everlasting remembrance.”

† This good prelate is incidentally mentioned in Madame de Rémusat's *Mémoires* in connection with Napoleon's behaviour to the Bishops of France, whom he had assembled in Council with a view to inducing them to co-operate with him in opposing the decrees of the Pope. “Sometimes,” he said, “the Emperor would have us all summoned, and would begin a theological dis-

it could no longer be suitably left. Accordingly he appointed a commission of dignified ecclesiastics to go and examine if the heart of Boudon were still in the place where it had originally been located. All had remained intact, even to the epitaph over it. Behind the epitaph was found the leaden urn, with its inscription, which the Bishop of Evreux, on the 6th of July, 1812, directed to be removed and placed in the chapel where the body reposed, and as near to it as conveniently might be. This was done, and a *procès verbal* drawn up, which was inserted in the archives of the bishopric.

The worthy prelate, having thus provided for the honour due to the relics of the servant of God, hastened to revive an institution which had been so dear to Boudon, and of which he had been the founder, the Confraternity of the Holy Angels, which had never ceased to flourish from the period of his death until the Revolution. The Bishop now put forth a pastoral address, in which he exhorted all devout persons to join this Confraternity "so long respectable for the number, the quality, and the virtues of its associates, but still more for the eminent piety of its first founder, the venerable Henri-Marie Boudon, the great Arch-deacon of Evreux." He also published anew all the

cussion with us. He would address himself to the most recalcitrant among us, and say, 'My religion is that of Bossuet; he is my Father of the Church; he defended our liberties. I want to commence his work, and to maintain your dignity. Do you understand me?' Speaking thus, and pale with anger, he would clap his hand on the hilt of his sword. The ardour with which he was ready to defend us made me tremble, and this singular amalgamation of the name of Bossuet and the word Liberty with his own threatening gestures would have made me smile, if I had not been too heavy-hearted at the prospect of the hard times which I foresaw for the Church."—English Translation, vol. i. pp. 159, 160.

indulgences with which the Sovereign Pontiffs, Clement XIV., Pius VI., and Pius VII., had successively enriched the association, appointed two Canons to administrate it, and renewed its statutes. His successor gave a like encouragement, and the author of the *Vie Nouvelle*, published in 1837, says, "On the Tuesdays and Fridays of every week, in the chapel where the body of Boudon reposes, and near the pillar which encloses his heart, Mass is said in honour of the Holy Angels and for the repose of the souls of the deceased associates. The feasts of the Holy Angels and their octaves are celebrated there with much solemnity; the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in this chapel during the whole year, a large number of devout persons frequently receive communion at its altar, and daily resort thither to pray. We may well believe that they do not forget the servant of God; indeed we know several who have not invoked him in vain in their difficulties and in their sufferings. But his holy soul must at least rejoice to behold from his abode of glory his pious institution still subsisting in the midst of the miserable convulsions which have destroyed so many other works, and still in this sanctuary attracting souls to God and to the angels who surround His throne."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SPIRIT OF BOUDON AND OF HIS WRITINGS

BOUDON'S chief characteristics will have been gathered from the simple story of his life. As was observed before entering on the narrative, complete self-abnegation, an entire emptying of self, seldom realised in its perfection even by persons of high spiritual attainments, formed one of the most striking features of his sanctity. God Alone—those words so often on his lips—were impressed upon him as a seal, and will for ever be associated with his memory and with the idea which he evokes in the mind. They were his motto, and may be regarded as a condensed description of the spirit which animated him. Yet a few additional remarks on the work which grace accomplished in this eminent servant of God may not be considered as superfluous.

First, however, as to the outward man, which at times helps to interpret and at others serves to veil the interior man, but which always, in these days of our mortal pilgrimage, shrouds in secrecy more than it openly reveals. Certain traits have already been incidentally portrayed, but some still remain to be noticed. Boudon was of middle stature, slight, and spare. He had a well-developed forehead; when preaching, his eyes glowed with animation, and they kindled in like manner when he was

conversing about God and heavenly things. The windows of the soul seemed then to be opened; but at all other times the light was extinguished and the orbs lustreless, the windows of the soul were closed. His countenance was serene and placid, but an air of deep penitence, rather than of sweetness, was its prevailing expression. It recalled to you the saints and hermits of the desert, who dwelt alone with God.

Boudon's mind was richly cultivated, but he did not avail himself of its stores to adorn or set off either his sermons or his writings. He never affected brilliancy. If he had the power, as he clearly possessed the materials for putting forth this element of effective eloquence, he certainly lacked the will. In fact, he was not brilliant. The same may be said with regard to humour and wit. Casual expressions and remarks of his serve to manifest his strong appreciation of contrasts and his possession of that faculty of comparison which, combined with imagination, gives the mind a keen perception of the absurd and the ridiculous, and enables one who is thus gifted to be witty and entertaining. Boudon, we are inclined to think, could have been witty had he chosen to be so, he could have moved his hearers to laughter by lively satire, he could have bandied repartees, but he never indulged in anything of the sort. Indulgence of nature was, indeed, completely foreign to his thoughts; and we fail to detect him even in the act of checking any such inclination. He conveys the impression of having entered on life in a habitual state of penitence, with all propensity to indulgence, whether of the senses or of the mental powers, entirely suppressed. But when were they thus suppressed? It is hard to say, for in this respect "the child" was "father to the man." Perhaps this suppression may have dated

from his first Communion ; when he received "the Bread containing all sweetness." Then he may have renounced all other delights once for all, for everything with him was once for all. Be this as it may, whatever Boudon may have wanted in brilliancy of language or play of wit and fancy was marvellously supplied by something above and beyond their sphere, something belonging to a higher order, for his words were attended with an unction far more mighty to win and captivate than any display of natural or acquired eloquence. But this subject has already been sufficiently dwelt upon in connection with his style of preaching.

Another prominent feature in Boudon's character was his simplicity, by which we mean the absence of all multiplicity of aim ; he went straight to God. Hence, extraordinary man as he was, he could not be said to be an eccentric one. Eccentricity always implies something startling, uneven, unaccountable, in the disposition or behaviour, but Boudon, although peculiar, so that he has quite a physiognomy of his own, even among saints, was cast in one uniform mould, if such an expression be allowable. His whole character holds together, and is harmonious with itself. If some of his actions, and, still more, his abstentions from action, considered in themselves, excite our surprise, yet, as proceeding from Boudon, they have not this effect ; they are what we might expect to find in *him*. For instance, some might be inclined to think that in the matter of refraining from self-justification he pushed a virtue to excess. They might allege that he could have legitimately done and said many things which he left undone and unsaid to clear his reputation from an infamous calumny, the injurious effects of which were not limited to himself but caused public scandal ; that

at least he might have displayed more activity in meeting the charges brought against him, instead of assuming a quasi-passive attitude, which emboldened his accusers. Nevertheless, no one is surprised at the different view which was taken by him. Indeed, Boudon bestirring himself for his own vindication would be a greater surprise than Boudon submitting to defamation. Yet are we disposed to blame him? Do we consider that this peculiar behaviour on his part proceeded, after all, from a defect in his character, which betrayed him into a mistaken line of action? No one, we think, would venture on passing such a judgment. We prefer seeking an explanation in the dealings of the Holy Spirit, who, if suffered freely to act, forms in each soul the foreknown and predestined type which it was designed to realise in Christ. This Divine Director is pleased to ask from one what He does not require from another; accordingly, we have every reason to think that Boudon was herein acting from the immediate movement of the Spirit of Christ, which, to quote words of his own, ought to act in His whole mystical body as the soul in the natural body.* To Its guidance he had committed himself, and was committing himself afresh at every moment of his life and under all circumstances, that God alone might act in him and that he might see God alone in all things.

So completely, indeed, was he occupied with the one absorbing relationship of himself and of all creatures to God, that the ordinary dissipation of people's minds was not merely painful to him to witness, but was matter of unaffected wonder to him. Expressions of this wonder abound in his writings, and their very reiteration serves to prove that this sentiment was with

* Letter ccxxxiv.

him abiding and not simply accidental. We have seen by his own confession what his feelings on this head were while travelling in a public conveyance, and we are told that on one occasion he was so deeply moved by the frivolous conversation with which his fellow passengers sought to beguile the weariness of the way as to break forth in an involuntary cry of pain. Questioned as to the cause, he replied, "Alas! we waste our time on all this trifling, while there is a God who might so profitably occupy our hearts and form the subject of our conversation." One day, when in a boat with many others, he inwardly groaned on observing that among all the passengers occupied with gazing at the scenery, as the vessel glided along, there was not a sign of any reference to the Author of what excited their admiration, or apparent recollection of His existence. This reflection made him sad, and, upon those who were about him questioning him as to the reason of his pensiveness, he said, "I was thinking that God by His immensity fills the whole universe, the very boat we are in, and yet no one gives it a thought." What afflicted him most was the seeming inutility of any such suggestions. "The mind and heart of man," he said within himself, "must be strangely disordered. You say to him, 'Look, here are animals, here are houses, trees;' and he looks at them, speaks of them, and makes them the topic of his conversation. You say to him, 'Here is God;' he pays no attention, and has not a word to say." As for Boudon himself, the least distraction from the adorable presence of God was like the dislocation of a limb; it was the removing of his soul from its centre.

Considering the concentration of his mind on God alone, some might be led to feel a sort of surprise at

the prolific details, and the inexhaustible variety and exuberance, of his devotions. Nevertheless, no contradiction is herein implied. True, his eye was unremittingly fixed on God alone, but it was that God in whom and for whom are all things. Every creature was, therefore, viewed by Boudon in Him or with reference to Him, and was loved in the same manner, but it was none the less seen and loved, or, rather, it was seen with incomparably greater clearness and was loved with infinitely more intensity. If Mary, for instance, was so inconceivably dear to him, and regarded by him with honour beyond what words could tell, it was because she was the chief work of God, who magnified Him more than did all His other creatures united, because she was nearest to Him, and that, too, by an ineffable union, shared by none other, and which none other could share. And so, in like manner, the same in their degree may be said of the princes of the heavenly court, the angels of His power, who surround the throne of the Eternal King; of the guardian spirits, who, while watching over us, still behold the face of God; of the saints, in whom He is admirable, each reflecting His glory and greatness in their several modes and measures—all were honoured and loved in and for Him in whom they exist and whose praises they proclaim.

Boudon's spirit was a spirit of love, and it could not be otherwise with one whose soul, like those unfledged nestlings which with open beak expect the coming morsel from the parent bird, was from the earliest dawn ever craving for its true food, the love of God. He opened his mouth wide, and God, according to His promise, filled it. "I praise and thank Divine Providence," he said one day, "in that, by an ineffable

mercy, It prevented me with Its divine attractions to Its love. It caused me even from my childhood to beg for this love with much instance and reiteration. Already, without understanding very well what I said, I cried out for divine love ; and, as time advanced, I asked for the love of God alone. These great and marvellous mercies have ever continued and even augmented in spite of all my infidelities." "It was not at intervals or by fits and starts, if I may thus express myself," says Collet, "that these movements arose in his soul. He experienced them day and night. The divine love in which he had fallen asleep awakened him ; and the first thought which occupied him was to breathe only for his God. All else was frivolous in his eyes ; and he would not have gone a step to behold Solomon in all his glory, if the hope of learning something in his school of the love of the God of virtues had not invited him to do so."

One of the fruits of this constant dwelling in the presence of God, drinking in love at the Fountain of Love, was a peace which nothing could disturb, and a joy which is the portion of His true children only ; for it never can be tasted in its fulness by those who have not entirely expelled the love of the creature from their hearts. "It is true, it is very true," said this holy man, "that, as the eye cannot endure without discomfort the smallest particle of dust, in like manner the heart cannot admit the least admixture of a strange love, without experiencing some uneasiness. This is why few persons are to be met with—I do not say among the worldly, it is of good people I am speaking, such as are living in an ordinary degree of justice—who possess in an abiding manner this peace which, as St. Paul says, surpasseth all understanding, and which,

albeit not always perceived in the inferior portion, does not the less reside with fulness in the centre of the soul." And again, in a letter to M^{me}. de Rouves,* we find him in like manner pointing to God Alone, as the source of this peace. "This truth," he says, "that, properly speaking, God alone exists, because all that is not in Him is nothing, places the soul in a state of blessedness, delivering it from all fear and all desire, passions which introduce trouble and anxiety into the greater number of minds. For, assuredly, he who fears nothing and who lives free from desires possesses a great peace." This peace and blessedness was manifest in the unruffled placidity of Boudon's countenance, notwithstanding that habitual air of penitence to which we have alluded.

If such was the element in which the soul of Boudon dwelt, the absorbing love of God alone, it is only what we should have expected when we find that he had a very special devotion to the Person of the Holy Ghost, to Him who is the Love of the Father and of the Son. "While still very young," he says, writing to M. Thomas, "I used to beg over and over again and cry out for divine love, without well understanding the greatness of this grace. My great feast, without knowing why, was the feast of Pentecost. Even that of Easter did not touch me as much as did that festival. I see now whither the attraction of my grace was leading me." We have already noticed the filial fear which accompanied and blended with that love which was the very atmosphere he breathed, a fear which sprang from the clear perception he had of the infinite perfection of God and of his own unworthiness.

We have no intention of noticing in detail all the

* Letter 1.

distinguishing virtues of this holy man. This would be to recapitulate his life, in which the reader will have already seen them exhibited ; but, as we have dwelt on the engrossing nature of his love for God, we must say a few supplementary words of his inexhaustible love for his neighbour. The love of God is an exclusive, but not an excluding, love ; rather may it be said to be an inclusive love, for it expels the natural love of creatures from the heart only to give them a participation in a love of a far higher order, a love infinitely more pure, more perfect, and more tender than any affection of the old Adam, however warm. It was thus Boudon loved his neighbour—in and for God alone, without eagerness, without solicitude, without self-appropriation. There was no friend so dear as to be in any way necessary to him, yet how sweet and touching was the love he bore his friends ! It is necessary to read his letters in order to appreciate the delicacy of his kindness and charity to them on every occasion, small as well as great. He did not measure that kindness and charity, as if he had only a certain amount to bestow and must husband and economise it accordingly. Following in his degree, so far as he was capable, the pattern of his Lord, he was all to and for each, as though there were none other in the world to care for. He literally obeyed the injunction, “Give to him that asketh,” and this, not only in the case of the needy, but in every other call upon his charity. He seems never to have reflected whether he had time or strength to respond to it. No letter remained unanswered, no appeal was left unnoticed, and, as his gift for relieving spiritual pains and trials had become widely known, applications from sufferers of this class were, as we have seen, countless. Yet,

notwithstanding these extraordinary demands on his time, we never find any trace of hurry in his letters ; no allusion suggestive of it, so far as we recollect, ever occurs ; nor does he in writing ever omit special reference to those nearly connected with the persons he is addressing, for whom, as well as for friends belonging to their circle, he has always some good spiritual wish or word of paternal advice, encouragement, or consolation, or assurance of his remembrance before God, according as their case may need or suggest ; and then the good angel is invariably remembered. He cordially rejoices at the prospect of meeting his friends, but he seldom fails to add, in some form, that his joy is only in his Lord, or, if he expresses pleasure at any circumstance or event, he is pretty sure to say that it is in Jesus only, for in Him only can he take any joy or pleasure. Boudon, as his readers well know, does not recoil from self-repetition ; as he never aims at effect, so he never thinks of retrenching what might diminish effect. His heart gives out of its fulness without ulterior view. He must speak of his one thought, or he must refrain from speaking altogether.

He who knew no measure in his charity and who spent time, means, health so unreservedly for others, expected nothing for himself, and the smallest kindness awakened in him the liveliest gratitude and even a species of wonder. In fact he saw all benefits through the medium of what he deemed his own unworthiness. His great personal humility took the form of the most sincere self-contempt. *Ma chétive personne* is his common way of designating himself, the epithet *chétive* uniting the ideas of insignificance and meanness which he thought best described him. Accordingly,

he was unaffectedly surprised at being the object of the regard or consideration of any one, and was even curiously thankful to those whom he remunerated for the trouble they took on his account. To have any dealings with him seemed in his eyes a piece of condescension. No length of time ever effaced from his recollection or cooled the warmth of his gratitude for any service done or kindness shown him; and we need scarcely add that he was unsparing of himself in his endeavours to requite them; mortifications, prayers, sacrifices, toil, trouble, nothing was grudged where it was question of repaying a benefit once received. And, if such was his grateful sense of the least good thing which came to him through his fellow-men, whom he regarded only as the instruments and ministers of Divine Providence in his regard, what shall we say of his gratitude towards that adorable Providence Itself, his sweet and tender Mother, as he loved to call It, which, like a mighty flood, was ever inundating his soul? He seems never to have lost sight of Its encircling arms; he could not view himself as anywhere else, and accordingly he seldom says, I went there, or did this or that, or published such and such a work; it is always the journey which Divine Providence caused him to make, or the work which It willed he should perform, or the book which It moved him to write and set before the public. And these were not the expressions of mere devout ideas and feelings; they bespoke something thoroughly practical in his conduct, as, indeed, was always the case with him. His sentiments were acts. Believing and feeling Divine Providence to be all that we have here described, his whole life was in strict accordance

with this conviction, and he neither moved, spoke, nor took a step without reference to Its guidance.

The spirit of Boudon was a spirit of meekness. "Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart" seemed to be the lesson ever before his eyes. Nevertheless, because he would have neither peace nor truce with the enemies of the Church, because he faithfully and firmly discharged the duties of his office, which was one of superintendence and responsibility, he was accused by his calumniators of a violent and vindictive temper, and of being actuated by animosity against the clergy whom he rebuked. His behaviour under the persecution which they excited against him was sufficient reply to any such charge. True, in the pulpit he gave full vent to his zeal for God, and denounced boldly the vices and follies of men, but in so doing he never pointed his reprimands at any one individually. It was common to see his hearers leave the church in tears, touched by the power of his words, but no one was ever known to come away scandalised or complaining that the preacher had singled him out for censure. His zeal had never in it anything harsh, overbearing, or vituperative, nothing which told of mere natural heat and fire ; he spoke strongly, but it was in God's name, after the example of the great archangel Michael, who, even when disputing with the devil himself, "durst not bring against him the judgment of railing speech, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."* Where it was question only of his own honour and personal interests, we have seen that he manifested a long-suffering equanimity and meekness which was scarcely intelligible even to good men, and which was generally blamed or lamented by his friends. A remark-

* St. Jude 9.

able instance of his heroic practice of this virtue is related by Collet. A short time before he was forbidden by the Bishop to hear confessions, a person of some station in the world entered his confessional, and, after telling him that he had chosen that place to relieve himself of what he had in his mind, forthwith proceeded to pour forth a torrent of abuse, which he concluded by saying that it was strange that a man of such scandalous character should be in authority over the clergy. The servant of God listened to him with undisturbed tranquillity, and, thanking him for his charitable intentions and remonstrances, left the confessional with a countenance of perfect serenity.

There is reason to believe that Boudon did this kind of thing without the smallest effort, nevertheless such acts were none the less meritorious. His sensitive mind and heart felt every shaft which was aimed at him, and, if it required no struggle on his part to master the resentment or, at least, the emotion which injustice and unworthy treatment naturally excite, it was because all such feelings were absorbed by a higher view and overpowered by a counteracting motive of the most pressing kind. If the natural man would have recoiled from sufferings, and must have done so from the very law of his being, the spiritual man in him loved them as most precious and desirable, nay, was greedy of them, and sincerely thankful to those who were the instruments of inflicting them ; and this, we may add, was another salient feature in the saintly subject of this biography, an intense delight in every species of misery and pain which could be endured by mind or body. One of those extraordinary lights vouchsafed to him in childhood had given him a perception, the vividness of which he lacked words to express, of the value

of crosses. He was not yet twelve years old when this favour was granted him, and a ray of grace revealed to him that in this valley of tears there is for the Christian no solid happiness save in suffering. From that moment, until his last breath, he never ceased to sigh and languish for the cross, and to beg of God humiliations, pains, and afflictions of every kind. Such prayers would be indiscreet, if not presumptuous, in those who lack the light he had received ; the more modest prayer that they may accept with filial submission and love all that God may be pleased to lay upon them is better suited to their state ; but Boudon could safely pray for what he so ardently desired, and that with a full knowledge and appreciation of what he sought. His petition was abundantly granted, it must be confessed, and it would be difficult to find in the Church's records any minister of Christ more persecuted, more humiliated, or more satiated with ignominy and contempt, or one who manifested more fortitude, peace, thankfulness, and satisfaction under his multiplied trials ; his satisfaction being only incomplete because, like the great St. Francis Xavier, his heart incessantly cried out to God, "More, yet more !" We have his own word for it, and he was the most truthful of men, and the least given to a shade of exaggeration in his statements, that it would have been the height of joy to him to be abandoned by the whole world, dragged upon a hurdle to the place of execution, and expire amidst insults, revilings, and obloquy. His tender devotion to the Sacred Humanity and the Passion and Cross of Jesus made such a death the object of his most ardent longings ; but this climax of his desires was not accorded to him.

It is far more rare to find souls sincerely covetous of

being mortified by others—for self-deception in this matter is *not* rare—or of being overwhelmed with pains and afflictions sent to them, but neither sought nor elected by their own will, than to meet with such as are forward to take upon themselves severe austerities and penitential exercises ; a proof of which may be seen in the well-known fact that many who might pass for saints so long as it is question only of voluntary self-denial and self-inflicted bodily sufferings, will fail upon very slight trial, if called on to submit to some mortification which is not of their own choice. “Touch the mountains, and they will smoke.” Submission on occasions of this sort is, indeed, the crucial test of genuine mortification. Boudon’s spirit of mortification was, however, exemplified in both these forms, for his life was one of rigid austerity and self-denial. Nevertheless, he by no means applied generally in the case of others the rule to which he himself strictly adhered ; and in this he manifested an admirable prudence and discretion. He treated each soul according to its grace. Hence we cannot characterise him as one who adopted in direction an indulgent system or the reverse. Indulgence, in the literal sense of the word, he would have considered as no charity towards a soul, but, practically speaking, he was often what is called indulgent. In his letters we frequently find him advising those who sought his guidance to moderate their austerities for reasons of health or because he apparently believed that a certain natural eagerness and impetuosity was at work in impelling to a course which grace did not demand. We have an instance in the advice he gave to M. Bosguérard when the latter was minded to enter into the religious state. Boudon had evidently his misgivings on the subject,

and says that we shall glorify our Lord perfectly by serving Him in His way, not in our own, and suggests that his friend's habitual infirmities were scarcely compatible with community life, for he had heard a very fervent religious say that in such cases there was much to endure, although in great and accidental maladies the sufferers were most tenderly cared for. Habitual, or what we should call chronic, maladies could not expect the same attention; other religious had said the same. Accordingly, he recommends his friend to delay coming to a resolution, and in the meantime execute with fidelity all the duties of his present charge, including assistance to the sick, surmounting every repugnance, for it would be an illusion to hanker after an Apostolic life full of great labours, which we cannot be sure that God requires of us, and not conquer ourselves in a few things which we know for certain are in the order of Divine Providence.

Boudon, we have seen, was a man of prayer. If we did not know this as a matter of fact, we might divine it as an inevitable conclusion from the eminent sanctity to which he attained, for prayer is the oil which feeds the lamp. It will be remembered that one of the wild accusations brought against him during his persecutions was that he never prayed, a priest having, it was said, attested that he had once lived in his society for six months and had never seen him engaged in mental prayer. It would have been nearer the truth to say that he was unremittingly thus engaged. His continual attention to the presence of God, undiminished by surrounding objects or passing events, which did but furnish matter for fresh elevations of soul to his Only Good, was in itself a perpetual prayer; but, notwithstanding the pressure of his occupations, he

gave to it, besides, large portions of his time, when, plunged in the Bosom of God, like a fish in its element, the deep waters, hours were to him as moments, and he enjoyed a foretaste of Paradise on earth. It is not, however, related of him that he was subject to raptures or ecstasies, that is to say, as regards abstraction from the bodily senses, but the absence of such effects of prayer is no proof that it may not belong to a very high order; nay, they may sometimes happen to souls on their first elevation to these exalted grades, and be subsequently withdrawn. We have every reason, indeed, to believe that he attained to a very high degree of passive contemplation, a state so admirably described by him in his great work on mental prayer, and that to which he would appear to have been peculiarly attracted.

In giving this short supplementary notice of some of the leading features in the sanctity of this great servant of God, one further observation must suffice. Boudon's spirit was pre-eminently that of the Gospel. He was imbued with the spirit of the Evangelists and was a true follower of theirs, but more particularly of him who was the disciple of the Heart of Jesus, the disciple of love, who has for ever the word testimony in his mouth, the disciple who closes the sacred record with that longing aspiration in union with the voice of the Spirit dwelling in the Church: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Thus Boudon is continually testifying to what he had seen and heard, to what grace had manifested to his soul in such living characters; and thus also is he ever making aspirations for the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth. The coming of that kingdom was an object of his special devotion, and one of his shorter works is devoted to the subject.* We

* *Dévotion au Règne de Dieu.*

there find him reminding us that the Gospel praises Joseph of Arimathea, not only as a just man, but as one who was "looking for the Kingdom of God";* that the Apostle declares, when speaking of the crown which the Lord, the Just Judge, will render to him in that day, that it will be given "to them also who love His coming;"† that when he presses Timothy, his dear disciple, to be instant in preaching, it is by the "coming of the Lord" and by His "kingdom" that he adjures him;‡ and that Christians, in the prayer which Jesus Himself taught us, repeat that petition daily, "Thy kingdom come." Adopting a devotion which was beginning, probably through his encouragement, to be practised in several religious communities and by some pious individuals, he made a novena for the establishment of this kingdom at the close of each year and the commencement of the new, from the feast of the Holy Innocents to the vigil of the Epiphany, "the day on which Jesus began to reign over us Gentiles in the persons of the Magi." It is with peculiar interest that we recall this devotion of Boudon in this our day, when our late Holy Father, Pius IX. of immortal memory, has indulged the repetition of the prayer, "*Adveniat regnum tuum,*" every time it may be uttered, whether by the lips or in the heart only.

Boudon knew of no compromise in the interpretation of the Gospel precepts. The Sermon on the Mount was the code to which he literally conformed his conduct. Blessed are the poor, blessed are they that mourn, blessed are ye when all men shall revile and persecute you and speak evil of you, were home truths with him, taken to his heart in all their fulness, cherished, and

* St. Mark xv. 43.

† 2 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ *Ibid.* iv. 1.

lived upon. Give to him that asketh, resist not evil, and to him who taketh away thy coat, give thy cloak also, and the like, were injunctions which in his own case were not felt to need any adaptation or qualification. Boudon, in fine, may be compared to the Gospel in action. With such simplicity was it received by him that we are continually meeting with some expression of his which reminds us of the spirit in which that same Gospel was embraced by its first converts. Boudon is, indeed, a primitive Christian in the full meaning of the term. Not alone the sincere milk but the strong meat of the word has been received and relished by him; he accepted it without admixture or restriction, and he administers it in like manner, without dilution and without accommodation to the feebleness or the delicacy of modern constitutions. He comes to us as St. Paul hoped to come to his spiritual children at Rome, "in the abundance of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ;" * nay, we make bold to say, there is an Apostolic tone about him, there is a savour in his writings, peculiarly in his letters, which recalls that of the Divine Epistles. In saying this we believe that we are asserting no more than all will testify who have a close acquaintance with his works, but it is only such close acquaintance which will capacitate any one for adequately realising the truth of the assertion. To any of our readers, therefore, who by a perusal of his Life have conceived a veneration for his character and virtues, we would recommend a diligent study of his writings, if they are not already acquainted with them. We confidently predict that they will find the estimate we have formed of them neither exaggerated nor mistaken.

* Rom. xv. 29.

The author of the *Vie Nouvelle* thinks that, in order to taste their unction and love their simplicity, readers must already be disposed to occupy their minds with the things of God, for that otherwise they will be repelled by the negligence of his style, his frequent repetitions, and the strictness of the counsels which he gives, opposed as they are to the dictates of the natural heart and so unpalatable to self-love. If this be true, his books would be more calculated to feed piety in humble and docile souls than to convert sinners. Possibly it may be so, although his preaching, which we know was remarkably similar to his writings, was very powerful in bringing souls to repentance, as, indeed, were his books also during his lifetime. Works of a purely ascetical character like his are, however, hardly likely to attract persons who have not already some sentiments of devotion, but experience has widely shown their striking effect in nourishing and deepening piety. In vain may literary defects be abundantly pointed out; it is not style, after all, it is not eloquence, it is not brilliancy, it is not even argument and close reasoning which draws the heart to God. It is far more the influence of personal holiness which converts the soul. Now, no one is more fully mirrored in his writings than is this lowly servant of God, who had utterly discarded self. They are the very transcript of himself, and herein, perhaps, lies the great secret of their power. Reading them, we are brought into immediate contact with the man, we are holding an interview with him. The pages seem instinct with the grace which must, as it were, have emanated from his person when on earth. We forget to criticise, we do not stop to dispute or object, but we passively imbibe and absorb the infection of holiness which per-

vades them. May the prayers of those—how many who can say?—to whom Boudon's words have come with so much spiritual profit for the well-nigh two centuries which have elapsed since he went to his everlasting reward, hasten the day when, we may be allowed to hope, his exalted virtues will receive the crowning stamp of the Church's approbation.

THE END.

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